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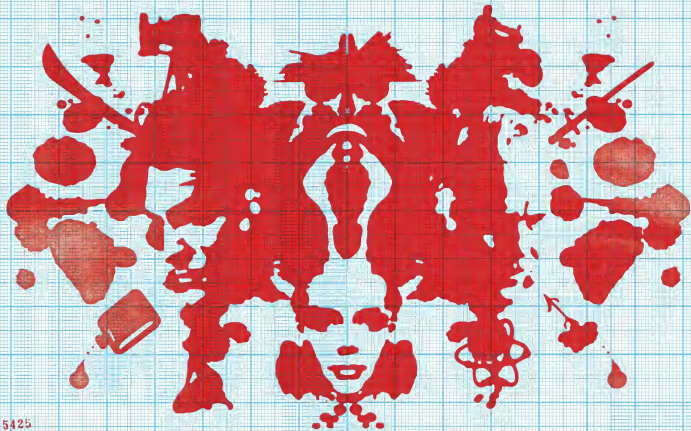
Little White Lies

truth & movies



The
Master

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1. **Identify the problem:** The first step is to identify the problem or issue that needs to be addressed. This involves understanding the context, the stakeholders involved, and the specific goals and objectives of the project.

2. **Analyze the problem:** Once the problem is identified, the next step is to analyze it. This involves breaking down the problem into smaller, more manageable components and identifying the root causes of the problem.

3. **Generate solutions:** The third step is to generate potential solutions to the problem. This involves brainstorming ideas and considering different perspectives and approaches.

4. **Evaluate solutions:** The fourth step is to evaluate the potential solutions. This involves comparing the solutions against the project goals and objectives, as well as considering the feasibility, cost, and potential risks of each solution.

5. **Implement the solution:** The fifth step is to implement the chosen solution. This involves developing a detailed plan of action, assigning responsibilities, and monitoring progress.

6. **Review the results:** The final step is to review the results of the project. This involves evaluating the effectiveness of the solution, identifying any lessons learned, and making any necessary adjustments.

"THIS IS SOMETHING YOU DO FOR A BILLION YEARS

+ OR NOT AT ALL."





The Master

Directed by **PAUL THOMAS ANDERSON**
Starring **PHILIP SEYMOUR HOFFMAN, JUDYTS IN PROGENY, AMY ADAMS**
Released **NOVEMBER 7**

Paul Thomas Anderson's spiritual post-war love story will restore your faith in cinema.

LEAD REVIEW

A swirl of ocean water. The cold touch of Navy steel. A thousand-yard stare set beneath the bullet-riddled contours of a Brodie helmet. Within the opening frames of *The Master*, the ticker-tape euphoria of the Allied victory is offset by the painful truth that for some men the Second World War didn't truly end. Of the countless young soldiers that were struck down by some form of psychological trauma, only the most acute cases were successfully treated by experimental therapies such as hypnosis and neuroleptics. For others, the horrors of war remained indelible fresh.

Waiting out the last days of the war on the champagne sands of an unidentified island in the South Pacific, Freddie Quill (Joaquin Phoenix) first appears more beast than man. Startless and disheveled like some battle-weary Robinson Crusoe, we watch him back away at coconuts with a blunt machete and wrestle his Navy buddies on the shore. He is a harrowing picture of posttraumatic stress disorder; his sunken eyes

(bloodshot from an addiction to crude liquor picked up during his tour), deep pools of anguish, his wiry frame brooded and stiff from years of front-line action. He is both literally and metaphorically at sea. A tragic addition to writer/director Paul Thomas Anderson's crowded roster of lost souls.

Back on home soil, Freddie is told by his superiors that the responsibilities of peacetime rest on his shoulders. He can become a chicken farmer, grocery clerk or department store photographer, return to education or start a family. It doesn't really matter. The Golden Age of American Capitalism is dawning and happiness is assured to those who are willing to reach out and grab it. But Freddie is precariously out of step with the newly galvanized civilian population; his psychosocial adjustment fraught with ominous overtones and impenetrable carnal urges. He prowls the shadows of society looking for a quick fix (and a quick fuck) wherever he can get it. He is savage and unstable. —

ALETHIA

BACK BEYOND

One sobered evening Freddie boards a private yacht, the *Alethia*, lured by bright lights and the sounds of revelry spilling from the deck. The next morning he is summoned to the captain's chambers like a storming IT's here that a cloudy headed Freddie (going with the audience) is formally introduced to Lancaster Dodd (Philip Seymour Hoffman), a robust, well groomed man dressed in a regal tuxedo and bathed in a soft, glowing light.

Apparently struck with an over-the-top sense of dignity, Dodd embraces Freddie with canine affection, affixing to a poor meeting between them – not from the right before (which we know was their first meeting even though, crucially, we never see it) but some other indistinct point in time. Perhaps a past life, Dodd asserts that he is a writer, doctor, nuclear physicist and theoretical philosopher and that he and Freddie are both "hopelessly inquisitive" men, an assessment that greatly amuses his guest.

In philosophy, telethe refers to the understanding of truth, something that is evident or fully disclosed. In characterizing Dodd's vessel accordingly, Anderson subliminally evokes the underlying principle of The Cause: a religiously religious service group founded by Dodd on his own abstract ideology. Tremendously endearing to everyone, particularly to Dodd's self-proclaimed host of accomplished, and yet Philip Seymour Hoffman's performance is so commanding that we immediately accept Dodd for who he is (or at least what he claims to be). Although later we will come to view him as a compelling public speaker, a self-styled psychiatrist, a comedian and a charlatan, for now deep in the bowels of the *Alethia*, he appears sincerely sincere, someone to be trusted. Like Freddie, we quickly fall under his spell.

BREAKING POINT

In the film's standout scene, which brings to mind the opening dinner table exchange between Philip Baker Hall and John C. Reilly in Anderson's 1996 debut *Mud*, Freddie agrees to participate in a one-on-one counseling/one-on-one counseling session that Dodd has coined "psychotherapy." With a tape recorder rolling, Dodd tells Freddie to respond without hesitating or blinking, and proceeds to rattle off a sequence of probing and repetitive questions: are you thoughtful in your remarks? Do your past failures bother you? Have you ever had sexual contact with a member of your family?

What begins as an informal profiling session – filmed as a breathless single-shot close-up – quickly escalates into something more sinister. Dodd's fascination with Freddie connects into raw obsession as he meticulously probes back the layers of his subject's psyche. Amid revelations of a recurring dream about his mother and a deep seeded resentment towards his estranged father, it becomes apparent that while his malaise was compounded by his time at war, Freddie's condition could well be rooted in an earlier trauma. In this moment a poignant question arises: is it possible to break what is already broken?

Freddie is told that he has wandered from the proper path and is asked to look "back beyond" to return to the pre-birth era. Dodd knows that before him is not just a worthy benefactor of The Cause but a right-hand man in waiting, someone who might substantiate his bold theories. But Freddie is more interested in his own self-medicating byproduct than Dodd's promise of help. Thus, the big idea of The Cause is that salvation comes from returning man to his inherent state of perfection, a hypothesis that provokes skepticism and skepticism is equal measure. As one satirical cynic eloquently observes during one of Dodd's healing sessions: science based on the will of one man is the basis of cult.

This is the only time you'll hear the 'c' word in *The Master*. Anderson isn't interested in drawing parallels between The Cause and any real life quasi religious group. Rather he uses the concept of cult as a springboard into a broader evaluation of pacifism versus militarism, good versus evil, and truth versus fiction. One to this cause the master framework he weaves numerous motifs from his previous two features – the dysfunctional family, the siring-as-father, the sexually-demeaning rule.

Freddie's over-active libido for instance is exposed somewhat surreptitiously during a dinner party scene in which he mentally detaches every female guest, as well as during a lunch chat at the Nazi-defending base and in flashback to that champagne bath where Freddie aggressively dry humps (in the most literal sense) a voluptuous figure and put out of mind. Anderson has spoken of a flirtation with pornography that developed in his early teens, a vice that would manifest itself in his 1989 debut short, *The Dark Dugger Story*, and *Boysie Nights*, the 1997 feature it inspired. Like Dodd, Anderson neither victimizes nor condemns Freddie, but instead views him as a kind of animal someone who can only hope to vanquish his demonic once his genetic impulses have been suppressed.

FAMILY

To Dodd, Freddie is part pet project, part-predator and – a debated understudy who is prepared to sacrifice himself for The Cause even though we suspect, he doesn't really understand why. He serves Dodd with unflinching loyalty, clashing with police at the home of a biochemist when Dodd is arrested for his brutality, with no regard for his personal safety.

This recklessness makes Dodd's family – demure matron Peggy (a sprightly nod to her sensational *Any Given Sunday*) and biological kids Val (Joey Plemons) and Elizabeth (Sadie Childers) – increasingly wary of The Cause's disruptive new recruit. Freddie lends and facilitates Dodd's monomania, inspiring something in him that no one, not even his wife, can explain. Understandably Peggy feels threatened by Freddie, but she tolerates his volatility, presumably because she loves her husband too much to jeopardize his new-found creative momentum.

If all this identifies *The Master* as an intimate character study, in truth it's much more than that: it's a stark and at times unsettling portrait of ➤





the human condition as seen through the eyes of two enigmatic individuals both stepping to their own beat at a time when social conservatism was becoming increasingly prevalent. America in the 1950s may have been a land of prosperity and opportunity, but there was also a decade in which bile-laced conservatism and the persistent threat of nuclear conflict weighed heavy on the public consciousness.

This polarized mood is reflected in both Jonny Greenwood's brilliant jazz-infused score and Mike Mills' J's devastatingly twisted Tinseltown palette. Filming in Los Angeles at the time of production, Mills' J— who recently filmed Francis Ford Coppola's monochromatic fever dream *Tetro* and *Dodot*—manages to recastulate every meticulous period detail without ever detaching from the metaphorical nuances in Anderson's script.

Like Dashi's Plummer before him, Dodd is a principled family man, but shows all the signs of a failed proof of existence, someone self-isolated and arrogant enough to stand behind his ideas however unusual and implausible they might be. America was built by men like Dodd: by the dreamers and pioneers whose faith captured the public's imagination and transformed a young nation ravaged by Civil War into an economic and technological superpower. Of course, *The Cruise* is a tribute to Dodd's own financial and ballistic ends and not an altruistic investment in his countrymen or species at large. Whatever his motives, however, it's clear that Dodd is not about to let anything or anyone stand in the way of his pursuit of greatness.

CRACKS

Final long takes and elaborate Swedish tracking shots are recognized hallmarks of Anderson's work, yet in *The Master* it is the protagonists themselves that are notably reified. We know that both men relish the sting of salt water in their lungs but while Freddie drifts along in search of slender footing, Dodd's nomadic, meandering pattern—he travels from San Francisco to New York City via the Panama Canal before eventually upping sticks in England—travels the result of two instincts: for the whole picture's sake, a solution of this mid-century boom and its occupational hazard of his conflicted middle-class. While initially this shared discomfort from the land strengthens Freddie and Dodd's bond, it's not long before their quest for identity comes unstuck.

Freddie accompanies Dodd to the desert to retrieve a buried trunk containing Dodd's unpublished work, which is located in print under the title *The Split Soler and without*. A gift to Liane's nephew? At the book's launch, Liane Derr's hitherto devout believer picks up on a subtle terminological inconsistency, prompting Dodd to uncharacteristically lose his cool. We know her just making it all up as he goes along—his philosophy dwells in trifles and advocates time travel as a rational principle to spiritual enlightenment—but for the first time the mask slips and Freddie begins to challenge his master's voice.

In an attempt to reaffirm Freddie's faith, Dodd takes him back into the desert. Driving into the middle of nowhere, Dodd gives a point on the horizon and turns towards it on his motorcycle, before returning to his starting position. It's a typically absurd stunt, the kind of pseudo theory Dodd is used to seeing Freddie buy up. Not this time. Freddie floers it and down it back back, leaving a crater behind. Dodd is in awe across the desert in emboldened contemplation.

After going their separate ways, Freddie and Dodd reunite in England, at *The Cruise*'s lavish new headquarters. Freddie had been expecting to

he welcomed with open arms, and is weakly upset when Dodd, with Peggy at his side, appears indifferent towards him. Just as Ruth Reynolds (Jack Hammer) meets the end of his tether with Dick Digger in *Rescue Night*, as Dodd has come to accept this, but he will never be able to waste Freddie, let alone mould him in his image. But Dodd's aloofness carries another meaning: He has felt the pain of having his heart broken by Freddie before, and though he swears not his adopted son to reassume his place at the head of the flock, he knows he couldn't bear to watch him ride off over the horizon again.

THE TRUTH

Freddie may be emotionally stunted, but does that automatically make him more susceptible to being manipulated by a charismatic charmer like Dodd? If the generalisation that the world is divided into those who lead and those who choose to be led is to be believed, is it also true that, as Dodd points out: "Everyone of us is living for some master"? Are humans beings simply hardened to conform? Or are we all searching for a higher truth? These are the types of questions that make *The Master* so challenging – not because there are no straight or easy answers but because Anderson leaves so much open to interpretation.

This is a film that will affect different people in different ways. If it is in many respects a sad portrayal of damaged companionship, although there is a warm glow to Freddie and Dodd's brief homestead on patrol, as well as a flashback to a tender scene between Freddie and his sweetheart, to whom he promises his hand only to discover upon returning home from war that she has already accepted another man's proposal and dropped town. There are unexpected bursts of humour, too. There's even a fart gag.

Made no mistake, this is serious emotional filmmaking. And yet for all that *The Master* is fragrant with groceries of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* – which it echoes in its use of stylised prose and symbolism to explore complex themes such as class, duty and the existence of a supreme being – and to a lesser extent Kubrick's *Apocalypse Now*, Anderson's storytray and magical realism remain vital components of Anderson's storytelling fabric.

The Master's lack of graphic violence (there's an Old Testament crucifixer or bloody third act ending to blood might suggest Anderson has cited his appetite for composing gruesome metaphysical parables. In truth, however, there is simply no call for such here. Twining performances aside, it's the understated games that stick with you – he is a gentle death knell in the form of a song and a single tear, or a cut away to a naked and woman that emphasises the importance of holding on to the things you love. **WORTH WATCHING**

ANTICIPATION: *Yes, yes, John, his Paul Thomas Anderson is a major cinematic event*

5

ENJOYMENT: *Confounding and infuriating. Unusually flawless work of cinema, despite that this isn't an easy or emotional romance*

5

IN RETROSPECT: *All hail the master*

5



"BRILLIANT...POWERFULLY HUMAN
AND LIFE-AFFIRMING"



HEAT

"EXCELLENT"

EVERETT STANDARD



THE GUARDIAN

"STUNNING"

EMPIRE

"ENTHRALLING"

THE GUARDIAN



DAILY TELEGRAPH

"BEAUTIFUL"

THE PLAYLIST



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IN CINEMAS **NOVEMBER 2**

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For its latest project, 55DSL teamed up with filmmaking collective Canada to produce a short film, *Beyond Mountains*, *Beyond Mountains*. This epic Italian road-trip travels from the mountains of Northern Italy to the Sicilian Island of Stromboli in the far south. It's a snapshot of a land and a generation that loves to look good.



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ACT

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Truth Processing P

*** WORDS BY ASHLEY CLARKE ***

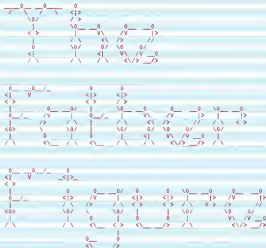
WHEN IT COMES TO UNDERSTANDING THE MOST ENIGMATIC
FILMMAKER OF HIS GENERATION, THE TEXT IS EVERTURNING.

Since emerging with his feature debut, *Hair Eight*, in 1990, L.A. native Paul Thomas Anderson has established himself as one of the pre-eminent American filmmakers of his generation. He may only have released six features in 16 years, but each new film has been marked by a rare combination of intelligence, humanity and technical mastery.

And mystique. Despite the high regard in which Anderson is held, little is known of his inner life or what drives him as a filmmaker. We know that he's an autodidact who dropped out of film

school after two days. We know that he once dated singer Fiona Apple, and now lives in L.A. with actress Naya Rudolph and their three children. But he is disdainful of the PR circus, and fiercely protective of both his work and his privacy. Over the years, Anderson has been characterised variously as a control freak, a genius and a brat who cut himself off from his childhood friends.

Choosing five defining factors, *Lilies* has built a portrait of the man and his movies that aims to penetrate this mystique. This is Paul Thomas Anderson through the looking glass. —



Ernie Anderson was no household name, but he was a well-respected figure in US entertainment circles. After working as a DJ in New York and Rhode Island, he moved to Cleveland in the late 1950s and became a TV personality. Finally, he settled in LA. His son, Paul, was born on June 28, 1970.

Twelve years later, Ernie gave Paul his first video camera, and in 1988 he provided the amusingly stentorian narration for the 17-year-old's mock-doc *like Pink Apple* *Story*, a hugely accomplished short that would eventually blossom into 1997's *Boogie Nights*. Ernie died from cancer soon after the first preview of *Boogie Nights*, and never got to see the finished film. Anderson Jr named his production company Ghoulardi after his father's most beloved TV character: a moustachioed hipster who popped up in the middle of horror films to outshine their ridiculous plots.

Ernie Anderson introduced his son to the entertainment landscape in LA, but the two men shared a complex dynamic. Though it's difficult

to ascertain the extent to which the recurrent variations of father/son conflicts in Anderson's work are directly inspired by his relationship with Ernie, it's nevertheless a remarkably strong through-line in his screenwriting.

Hard Eight features an older man taking a young driver under his wing; while *Boogie Nights* sees a porn director do the same. But it's most explicit in 1999's *Magnolia*, with two storylines dedicated to strained familial relationships. It's been suggested that much of the material regarding the ailing Earl Partridge in *Magnolia* (as played by Jason Robards) was based on Anderson's experience of watching his own father die of cancer. There *Will Be Blood* (2007), meanwhile, features a ruthless oilman's shocking abandonment of his only son.

The *Raster* also explores the issue of father-son surrogacy. This time, however, it's the younger man who harks back to Ernie. Like Anderson Sr, Joseph Phoenix's Freddie Quell is a Navy veteran who served in the Pacific during World War II, and was born around 90 years ago.

The San Fernando Valley

In Thom Anderson's 2003 film essay, *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, the director laments the condescension of legions of filmmakers toward the city's suburbs: "They know only one part of the city, and that part's been tapped too often." That's not a charge one could readily throw at Paul Thomas Anderson.

Growing up in the San Fernando Valley — a metropolitan chunk of southern California — he spent a significant portion of his teens haunting the area with his camera, scouting (even if unconsciously) for future locations. And yet there's an insecurity about these roots. He wrote in 1999: "For many years I was ashamed, thinking that if I was not from the big city of New York or the farm fields of Iowa I had nothing to say."

But Anderson grew to love the LA hinterland. *Boogie Nights* sees the director returning to memories of his youth as a sex-obsessed Valley soomp. It's an affectionate tale of losers, dreamers and shabby anti-glamour set in the pornographic heartland; a place where people go to be

someone else. By his own admission, Anderson's *Magnolia* was an attempt to make "the mother of all San Fernando Valley films", an anguished tone poem to the area as a crucible of existential anxiety.

Lower key, though more fascinating as a yardstick of Anderson's changing relationship with the area, is 2002's *Punch-Drunk Love*, a woolly, unkempt comedy-drama. Its disturbed protagonist, Barry Egan (Adam Sandler), dreams of escaping the banal part of the city in which he lives and works. It's notable that every major factor affecting Egan and facilitating the story's progress comes from outside the spacious but oddly claustrophobic Valley: his love interest is English; his nemesis is from Utah; and his big moment of physical romantic courage occurs in Hawaii. It's as though Anderson was communicating an urge to expand his horizons beyond the limits of home. Although his subsequent work has been set in and around the state of California, it has unfolded on broader historical and thematic canvases. ←

ROBERT ALTMAN

Over the years, Anderson has been favourably compared to a host of filmmakers, from Quentin Tarantino and Martin Scorsese to Orson Welles, John Huston and Stanley Kubrick. However, one influence stands above the rest, helping us understand the filmmaker Anderson has become. "There have been a hundred who have tried to be Robert Altman," he once wrote, "but they miss that certain ingredient: they aren't him."

Thematic and stylistic comparisons between the pair began to crystallise around the release of *Magnolia*, which resembled Altman's 1993 *Short Cuts* in its sprawling account of unhappy, interconnected Angelinos. Though *Boogie Nights*' shaggy-dog charm evinced more than a hint of Altman's Nashville (1975).

Like Altman, Anderson quickly developed a company of regular actors

who spoke in rapturous tones about him, contributing to the sense that he is very much an actors' director. Anderson even cast Altman stalwarts Henry Gibson and Michael Murphy in small roles in *Magnolia*. There's also a prominent link on the technical side: Anderson's editor Dylan Tichenor – largely responsible for the ebb and flow of his multi-character works – was assistant to Altman's long-time editor Geraldine Perone on several films in the 1990s, including *The Player*.

A final connection underscores the closeness of their bond. The ailing Altman hired Anderson as a backup director on 2007's *A Prairie Home Companion*, and charged him with taking the reins in case of his incapacity. Altman died shortly after the film's completion, but not before symbolically passing the baton to the younger director.

The Tracking Shot

In *Hard Eight*, Anderson unleashed a neometrically complex tracking shot around a casino just one year after Martin Scorsese's *Casino* had set the template. *Boogie Nights* pushed the envelope even further. Though some critics denounce the tracking shot as emblematic of a director with more style than substance, the use of this technique actually reveals a filmmaker thinking carefully about how to tell a story. Consider the words of Anderson regular William H. Macy: "These long, sweeping shots are becoming legendary, but each one advances the plot. And when the shot is done, he comes back to the moment. It makes you feel safe."

The opening take of *Boogie Nights* is technically breathtaking, but it also performs the narrative feat of introducing us to a large cast

of characters in short order. In *Magnolia*, Anderson drew upon his childhood knowledge of television for the astonishing tracking shots around the quiz show studio, the length and complexity of which induced a triple tension in story, character and audience.

Post *Magnolia*, Anderson's use of tracking shots has become sparser. The camera's slow-motion mobility in *There Will Be Blood* – think of the devastatingly creepy track around the small church when preacher Eli Sunday (Paul Dano) delivers his exhortive – display a rigorous stateliness, harking back to the searching Steadicam work of Kubrick's *The Shining*.

Anderson's use of the tracking shot as a technique may well come to define the director in retrospect: searching, complicated, visionary and mobile.

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Filmmaking is often characterised as a game of luck, but a seven-year-old Paul Thomas Anderson is said to have written in his diary, 'My name is Paul Anderson. I want to be a writer, producer, director, \$50 man. I know how to do everything and I know everything. Please hire me.' Here, one suspects, was an individual with a preternaturally firm grasp of his own destiny.

Accordingly, Anderson has injected a fascinating thematic through-line of fate, chance and predestination into his canon thus far. Like the novels of Thomas Pynchon (whose LA now, interest vno, Anderson will supposedly direct for his next project, little in the director's work is completely random. Instead, things happen according to some abstract cosmic order.

His breakthrough short, 1993's *Cigarettes & Coffee*, told the story of a small group of down-and-outs mysteriously connected by a \$20 bill. *Boogie Nights*' narrative hinges on a fluke discovery that many 17-year-old dishwashers with 13" members are there? *Agnes* – an epic of chance – opens with a prologue comprised of three tales of freakish coincidence and features a host of characters bursting into song at the same time. And what was the role of the rickety harmonium mysteriously dropped off outside Barry Egan's office in *Pusher*? *Love* it not to act as a harbinger of discordant activity to come? There will be blood went even further, exploring the concept of American manifest destiny and westward expansion through the fortuitous discovery of oil. ☺



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Top Secret

*** INTERVIEW BY ADAM WOODWARD ***

PRODUCER JOANNE SELLAR REVEALS THE SECRETS OF PAUL THOMAS ANDERSON'S CREATIVE PROCESS, AND EXPLAINS HOW SHE FELL PUNCH-DRUNK IN LOVE WITH THE DIRECTOR'S WORK.

"I used to help run the Scion cinema bar [producers] Stephen Mooney and Nik Powell in the mid-'80s. They were developing Palace Pictures at the time and decided to launch a music video division. I went off to spearhead that, and basically learned how to become a producer. I cut my teeth on Richard Stanley's *Hardware* in 1989.

"After that I did another film with Richard, called *Just Say It*. It was an interesting learning experience: we were in post-production when Palace went bankrupt. At that point we set up Scion Productions, opened an office in LA and optioned the script to *Dark Blood*. I went over to get the film financed and cast — unfortunately, Silver Phoenix died 12 days from the end of production. It was tragic, but one positive thing that came out of my time in LA was that I got to meet Paul Thomas Anderson.



"One of the producers on *Hard Eight* was looking for a line producer, and I recommended my new husband, Daniel Lupt. He got on really well with Paul and introduced us. We instantly hit it off. I remember some time later he gave me the script for *Boogie Nights*, and just being totally blown away. I knew I had to work with him. You could tell right away he was someone on the up, somebody who really, really knew what he wanted and who had serious vision.

"He was very hyper, very energetic. He was young and cocksure, really just an arrogant kid who wanted to make films. But he always had this air of someone who was very focused and clear about what he wanted to achieve and how he was going to do it. He was extremely stubborn, which can be hard from a producing point of view. But of course you have to respect that cockiness because it's his uncompromising attitude that makes him such a great filmmaker. It took a while for him to trust me, but that's how it is with Paul: he's not someone who automatically trusts people; you really have to earn his respect. But once you do gain his trust he's completely loyal.

"Paul will start writing scenes for a new project and go through it with me, talk to me about how it looks in his head. We have long conversations. I'll read the scenes and once he's got a complete script I'm the first person to read it —

"I'll suggest changes and make notes, we'll talk some more until he's ready to go away and refine it. We've worked together on every film since *Google Nights*, so we have a shorthand now which allows us to get on with my job and respect his style. The thing with Paul is, when you're working on one of his films, you're really working on it. It's a long-term thing and you have to be fully committed."

"Having children in 2001 totally changed my professional outlook. I made a choice just to do Paul's films because I couldn't manage doing other people's films while trying to raise a family. I never really wanted to take the studio route. I've had opportunities along the way, but I've never been interested in that side of the industry. If I work on something I have to feel really passionate about it. I need to believe in the person who's making it. Otherwise it's just a job and that doesn't interest me."



"After we've put a project to bed there's usually a period of downtime, but in the case of the *Master* Paul is already talking about the next one. That's really unusual because typically he likes to finish one thing before he starts thinking about what he might like to do next. He'll often have kernels of ideas in different stages that he's working on, but usually you'll see those ideas re-emerge two or three years later. But he's already chosen to make an adaptation of *Subversive Vice* for his next film. He's a huge Thomas Pynchon fan and he became interested in the book when it got published. There was a point when the *Master* got delayed when it looked like he might make that first. He was obsessed with getting the *Master* out though, so as soon as we got the money together there was no going back."

"Hagen Ellson was our saviour on *The Master*. Universal commissioned Paul to write a project straight after *There Will Be Blood*. It took him quite a while, which isn't uncommon, but it was during that time that Hollywood really started to change quite profoundly. 'Dreams' became a dirty word to the major studios, they became interested in just doing popcorn movies and no one wanted to touch anything that was deemed high-art."

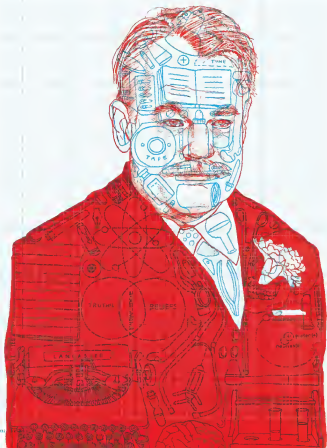
"PAUL'S BECOME A MORE ORGANIC FILMMAKER OVER THE YEARS; HE'S MUCH FREER AND MORE OPEN. A LOT OF THAT IS DOWN TO CONFIDENCE."

"Universal backed away from the project so we took it to the independents, which itself was changing because all the indie-majors – Paramount Vantage, Miramax – had shut up shop, and the surviving indie labels like Fox Searchlight and Focus had pretty much cut their budgets back to nothing. Hagen had just set up a start-up film financing company and was looking to finance great movies made by real auteurs. We met with her and she was a huge fan of Paul's and was willing to take a risk on us. She was the only one who had any balls in that town."

"Paul's become a more organic filmmaker over the years, he's much freer and more open now, and a lot of that is down to his own confidence, which seems to grow with every film. *Google Nights* and *Magnolia* were very well thought-out in that in pre-production he'd have shot lists written out for every day of production, which is pretty unheard of. On *Punch-Drunk Love* he became a lot more fluid in terms of how he approached the production. He's less guarded now, he's able to listen to other people's opinions and still follow his gut instinct. Nowadays Paul seeks out the input of guys like [art director] Jack Fisk, [DP] Robert Elsholtz and [costume designer] Mark Bridges in the very early stages of production."

"We're a big family, but it's a very serious, earnest endeavour to make a film with Paul. Everyone takes their role very seriously, and Paul expects a certain level of professionalism from everyone he works with. He's mellowed out a lot, but he's still very much a control freak. He still wants to do everything in a way, but he's got a family of his own now and he's definitely become more relaxed with age, but he's still that same cocksure kid inside. He will never ever compromise on anything." @

carhartt.
WORK IN PROGRESS



The Illusion of Hoffman's Choice

*** INTERVIEW BY ADAM WOODWARD ***
TTT ILLUSTRATION BY ADAM CRUFT TTT

PHILIP SEYMOUR HOFFMAN DOES WHAT HE HAS TO DO.

Philip Seymour Hoffman has made a career out of playing sad sacks, oddballs and belligerent assholes. The kind of self-loathing, self-pleasuring creeps you wouldn't want to get stuck in a lift with. But whether he's getting his method on to portray an American literary icon, running Ethan Hunt's day or just breathing heavily down the phone, Hoffman is invariably a compelling screen presence. Nowhere more so than in the films of his long-time friend Paul Thomas Anderson.

Hoffman has appeared in all but one of Anderson's six features stretching back to 1996's *Hard Eight*, establishing himself as a versatile character actor in the process. In the decade since their last collaboration, 2002's *Punch-Drunk Love*, Hoffman has reaffirmed his passion for the theatre, earning a

Tony nomination for his lead turn in the Broadway revival of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. He's also directed his first feature, *Jack Goes Boating*, and recently announced his second, *Isabel*. *Woe*, which appeared on the ZUT! industry "Black List" of acclaimed unproduced scripts.



Despite this late career shift, Hoffman isn't about to turn his back on life in front of the lens just yet — he's due to start filming *A Most Wanted Man*, Anton Corbijn's follow-up to *The American*, and *The Hunger Games* sequel within the next few months. Before all that, LVL's met up with Hoffman to get the lowdown on his special relationship with Anderson and his astonishing performance in *The Reader*. ➤



"Paul and I started talking about this character four years ago. But it's weird; I didn't really have a backstory for Lancaster in mind. I know I thought about it a lot but I don't think I tried to nail it down too much. I think the less you know about him, the more interesting a character he is. He's just a guy who's basically dabbled in lots of things; he got a few degrees and probably did some service in some kind of military capacity. And then I think he became interested in treating people and dealing with people and helping people. He's coming from a good place, I think. That's his history — he's a guy who's done a lot of different things. How much of all of those things he

says he is are true, I don't know. It's hard to nail him down and in that sense it was difficult to play him. He is a mysterious guy.

"In terms of how I dealt with him technically there were a lot of different points of inspiration outside of the obvious stuff. But who he is and the way he is, the internal life of the guy, is something I had to think a lot about by myself. It's not that I wanted to avoid reference points; it's just the way I tend to do things. It's so hard to put into words because it's something that takes place over a long period of time. It's a gradual process; a lot of discussion and reading and research goes into it."



"It's been 10 years since Paul and I made a movie together. It's good — now we don't have to do it again for another 10 years. No, I mean, this was a great one to be in. But my working relationship with Paul doesn't matter; it's my friendship with him that does. I get concerned when we don't talk for a few months, not when we don't make a movie together for a few years. I make sure that we stay close as friends and that's what we concern ourselves with. In his meanderings of trying to put stories and scripts together — because he writes all the time — if he comes upon something that he decides suits me then we'll talk about it, but otherwise I'm not constantly looking to work with him. I've already worked with him enough for a lifetime, in a lot of ways. But I

hope we keep working together. I hope I'm still a part of his stories. But if not then that's okay.

"It's funny because I have this whole other life in the theatre that he's not a part of at all. It's such a huge part of my life and I think that's always been very healthy for our relationship because I bring a lot of what I do in the theatre into Paul's world. I think Paul's more open to a lot of things now, people's input and opinions. He's more open to feedback and criticism. You've got to trust yourself and have confidence in what you're doing, and Paul has a lot of that so it's tough for him to let others in and listen to different ideas. But he's getting really good about allowing mistakes to happen. It's a more organic process now."



"I became a director in the theatre many years ago and that's been my thing for a while now, so when I crossed over into directing a movie I did think about Paul, but also a lot of other directors I've worked with. The biggest thing Paul taught me was that whatever you do has to be yours, whether it's on stage or on a movie set. It's got to be personal; it's got to mean something. I'm on my own journey now and I hope I can make a handful of miles in my life. I'm trying to find my own voice as a director and there's no doubt that Paul will

continue to be a guiding influence in that respect.

"You always go back to acting and you kind of forget anything that's a creative thing like that. It's easy to forget how you did it, it's hard to replicate how you made something work before. When something comes to you you go with it and from there you might go off in any number of directions, but you always forget how that actually happens. I guess it always starts with a question though, as stupid as they sound, you have to find a way into the conversation."

"I have a love for my life. It makes me stronger than anything you can imagine."



"I'm a very curious guy, but I also want to shut down sometimes. In the storytelling business you're constantly being inquisitive and digging at yourself. Sometimes you've just got to leave it alone. But Lancaster is definitely someone I found hard to switch off from. I just find it so moving that all he wants is to be close to this guy. It fascinates me that the need you can have for another individual can be so strong. And I think there's something really attractive about being as free as Freddie is, certainly that's a quality Lancaster enies."

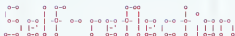
"Making this film reinforced my belief that all religions and social movements are susceptible to

these types of figures. For me, I wasn't interested in just looking at Scientology because there are so many other movements that have come out of charismatic men. But I shy away from the easy, cynical 'It's a cult movie' line because I don't think that gets anybody anywhere. There's nothing 'culty' about it, you know, it's not like we're sat around drinking Kool-Aid. It's a psychological, emotional thing. I like the idea of seeing if it's possible to be manipulated or led down a certain path regardless of who you are or what your beliefs are. I've always been a little bit wary of who's leading me, what group I'm involved with, you know. It's good to never blindly follow, to keep asking questions."



"Every time I make I always try to read reviews in the beginning, just to take a temperature of it. I've learned that it's almost irresponsible not to because you can end up having a situation where everyone around you is really scared to tell you the truth, and that's not fair to make people be like that out of your own ignorance. I want to know enough that I can look anyone in the eye and know what people are saying. But then I let it go

because after a point it is what it is and things just take their course. I've been there when the reviews are really harsh and negative and obviously it's not nice, but you can't let it affect you. You have to learn to take it on the chin and just let it be. Every once in a while you do something that gets torn apart and you'll read stuff and think, 'Yeah, you know what, I see your point.' Mostly it's about knowing enough to be able to let it go."



"What else could I want? I've given and shown up to the best of my ability and career-wise I think I've had it as good as I could ever have dreamed. I hope I don't start gaining regret because I feel really good right now. I've dealt with all the bad stuff and learned to take it with the good. Life-wise that's a different question, but career-wise I've been very lucky. I want to do a lot of different things. Right now I want to keep directing theatre, I have

plans to do that next year. Maybe direct a film, too. Hopefully I'll direct many more films and maybe produce some as well. I'm lucky in that sense because even though I'm a terrible writer I have good relationships with a few really amazing writers. My brother is the writer in the family and most of my closest friends are writers so I kind of vicariously do that through them. I love talking things through with people." ☺

Going Long Live Film



*** WORDS BY DAVID JENKINS ***

TRADITIONAL FILM STOCK IS UNDER THREAT FROM THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION—SWEEPING CINEMAS. SO WHY HAS PAUL THOMAS ANDERSON FILMED *THE MASTER* IN 70MM—THE MOST EXPENSIVE AND IMPRACTICAL FORMAT OF THEM ALL?

"IT'S A FILMMAKER. THAT'S WHY I'LL NEVER MAKE A MOVIE ON VIDEOTAPE."
—PAUL THOMAS ANDERSON

Paul Thomas Anderson: "The Master is shot on which stills and is an astounding 200 stock that is enough to acquire enough to project and enough to distribute. There were questions for director's movies, but for us tonight we need look no further than his own work. Take, for example, the scene from *Boogie Nights* in which Philip Baker Hall's porno financier plays himself in a scene directed Jack Horner (Burt Reynolds) that he gets like the salacious industry shifts and starts shooting his boys. Back on a new, cheaper format: video. Horner, watching a very sexy scene along with his artistic dignity, insists that, 'If it looks like shit and it sounds like shit, then it's shit.'"

A little technical background: photographic film stock—the tangible 35mm reel that you hold in your hand and develop via a chemical process—is slowly being replaced in the film industry's staple format. The new kid on the block is DCP, or 'digital cinema package', essentially a memory-stick flash drive containing a high quality digital copy of a film. With super-sized 70mm film, 45mm of its diameter is used to retain the image, while the remaining 5mm is used for holding its magnetic audio track. The difference between 35mm and 35mm film is like the difference between a Kindle and a paperback book. The difference between 35mm and 70mm is the same as a paperback book and a certain First edition classic that's been folded in gold leaf. So put it in terms Jack Horner would appreciate: 70mm film doesn't look like shit and it certainly doesn't sound like shit.



Tony Jones, manager of the Cambridge Picturehouse, one of the few venues in the UK still in possession of 70mm projection facilities, echoes Horner's sentiment: "For my money, it is the best format to shoot on, but the business model just doesn't work. And it's not just the image. The sound on 70mm film is, I think, still superior to the belly-bleed-track system used by most cinemas that now undertake digital upgrades."

In the 'early days', 70mm was like oversized 35mm film strips and Greek muskets. Fred

Forrester is like a bomb because the first film is so shot. In 1955, and it was as if it followed the film of Frank Sinatra's little-known *The Big Chance* to present to me of certain discipline and serious Logan's adaptation of the Western and Remembrance of the South Pacific, both in 1959. This was the era of cinematic bombast, when prints were hired by over-sized picture houses with 60-foot screens where the colossal, immersive nature of the image could be experienced in all its mighty splendour.



Yet the medium was later embraced for its artistic depth of field and ultra-detailed resolution. Such was crystallised in the expansive, forbidding qualities of the desert in *Lawrence of Arabia* in 1962 to digital restoration in 2008 in the UK on November 15. Jones had seized the possibilities of the expanded frame in its fullest with his 1967 masterpiece, *Playboys*, in which every scene has multiple points of focus. And Stanley Kubrick achieved an all-encompassing grandiose sweep for 1968's 2001: A Space Odyssey, but with each print costing around 125,000 to produce and with each reel only containing 20 minutes of film, the logistics of 70mm screenings were both complex and prohibitively expensive. As a result, it wasn't unusual for a single 70mm print to tour the country in a 'roadshow' presentation. Tony Jones recalls the lessons that satisfying took of screening Philip Kaufman's 1957-minute extravaganza *The Right Stuff* in 70mm, squeezed into a projectionist's booth with 10-bulking reels of film. "The costs are phenomenal," he says. His book's recent publication at 100 pounds is the UK, but is only screening digitally in the UK. "The producers weren't even thinking of having 70mm prints of the film made." Jones adds, "One mistake is the projection booth and books." Twenty-five grand up in costs.

Joshua Logan is head projectionist and repertory programmer for Chicago's Music Box Theatre, one of the US venues that played host to a pre-release screening of *The Master* in 70mm. In the four years that Logan has been on the job, the only time the 70

Super-size me

THREE OTHER LARGE-SCALE FILM FORMATS THAT NEVER QUITE CAUGHT ON.

CINERAMA

Tony Jones describes Cinerama as a "great format [with] terrible films". Now seen as taking things just a tad too far, the Cinerama process developed by Disney promised such a large image that it required three perfectly set and calibrated projectors just to screen the films. Star-spangled western epic *How the West Was Won* remains the definitive example of Cinerama, even though the film's four directors were unable to shoot such basic coverage as close-ups of stars including John Wayne and Gregory Peck.

CIRCARAMA

Also known as Circle-Vision 360°, Circarama was another gimmicky format developed by Disney for use in its theme parks. Utilizing nine cameras to capture a full 360-degree panorama, it was first used for patriotic documentary short *America the Beautiful* in 1955.

SHOWSCAN

Developed by Douglas Trumbull, the mad SFx genius behind 2001: A Space Odyssey, and director of hippy-clippy comic/jaunt silent funfest *Showscan* was a 65mm format that ran at 60 frames per second, resulting in a richer and more detailed image than 35mm films shot at the traditional 24fps. Trumbull created his 1983 film *Brainstorm* in Showscan, but it really took off as the stock-of-choice for theme park simulator rides. However, Showscan proved prophetic, as both James Cameron and Peter Jackson have recently talked about the aesthetic advantages of shooting films at a higher frame rate, with Jackson's forthcoming *Rings* trilogy shot at 48fps.

Walter just had witnessed it 70mm prior to this and a restored print of Robert Wise's best side story: "Every time we do a screening on a 70mm screen, a good deal of retooling for the projection staff is necessary to make us no print damage occurs," says Logan.

"Additionally, though our film projectors normally can run both 35mm and 70mm with just the replacement of a few key parts, we've found that there are always a few hours of calibrations needed every time we switch from one format to the other, particularly with regards to another thing. But I've not found the handling or threading of 70mm film prints to be particularly difficult; the sheer physicality of the print in one's hands usually leads to a more measured, determined handling than one typically affords a 35mm print."

When it comes to screening films from prints, the question is whether digital film projection can ever match real film. "4K can almost match 35mm in terms of resolution," says Logan, though it's struggling with image-quality and contrast. "We digital can be able to match 70mm? It's more film looks so large, it's substantially brighter and can present an incredibly wide image with no anamorphic lens distortions," Logan continues. "In short, you've made DCP's job of catching up quite a bit harder. You've raised the gauntlet."



Though 70mm has long been a viable format (there wasn't a single live shot of 70mm during the show at the 1990s), there are 34,000 and organizations that exist to celebrate and preserve the medium. Since 1994, Thomas Hauerclay has been editor of *The 70mm Newsletter*, a nonofficial's circular used to disseminate technical conventions and screening dates for 70mm films. He is now publisher of *70mm.com*. "But who is simple to encourage filmmakers to produce and make new films in 65mm, then project them in 70mm with six-track discrete digital sound on big curved screens," says Hauerclay.

He continues: "Custom codes are still producing 70mm film stock, so it's still possible to shoot in it. Thanks to a few cinema owners and managers—and, of course, the audience—interest for 70mm is kept alive. This was the impetus behind starting The Widescreen Weekend in 1996, which is a festival that only shows off 70mm films."

The contributors to the site also needn't document every film screening in 70mm across the entire globe. Whether UK audiences will be seeing any screenings of *The Master* posted there remains highly doubtful. ■

"ONE OF THE ALL-TIME GREAT COP FILMS"

DAVE KARGER, RUC FOCUS 3 LIVE

"JAKE GYLLENHAAL AND MICHAEL PEÑA ARE OUTSTANDING"

ALISA MEDARDE, RUC FOCUS 3



LADIES



THE GUARDIAN



JAMES CRISP, CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

"POWERFUL AND COMPELLING"



E!

**"YOU WON'T LEAVE
THE EDGE OF
YOUR SEAT"**



JAMES BRYANT, MOVIE CLASSIC



JAKE GYLLENHAAL MICHAEL PEÑA

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IN CINEMAS NOVEMBER 23

Utopian Visions of Death

IMAGES COURTESY OF MARK RYDEN STUDIO AND PAUL KASHIN GALLERY

POP SURREALIST MARK RYDEN HAS BEEN CREATING DISTURBINGLY BEAUTIFUL OIL PAINTINGS FOR ALMOST THREE DECADES. PERVAHING THE DEEPEST, DARKEST RECESSES OF THE SOUL, HIS ALCHEMICAL ART Juxtaposes FAIRY TALE IMAGERY WITH MACABRE MOTIFS AND CULT ICONOGRAPHY.

Pink Lincoln, 2010



Oil on canvas, 55 x 34 x 3 inches









Come With The Programme

*** WORDS BY JANE MORAN ***
*** ILLUSTRATION BY CHARLEY JAY TTT

LIFE-SAVING INTERVENTION OR 'SPIRITUAL GANG RAPE'?
LALIEE MEETS THE EX-CULT MEMBERS BATTLING FOR THE
HEARTS AND MINDS OF THEIR FORMER COLLEAGUES.

No one knowingly joins a cult. But they will, sign up for a charity group, a self-improvement course or a new type of exercise class, says Ian Haworth, the founder of the London-based Cult Information Centre. "I can't think of a single case that didn't start off innocently," he says, looking back over 33 years of experience.

Haworth learned about the belt and switch the hard way. Before he began advising people on cults, he was part of one. He was 31, living alone in Toronto, far from his home in Lancashire, when a beautiful blonde with a clipboard stopped him at an intersection with a survey. She hung on his every word, told him she was part of a community group that he should join, then invited him to an introductory evening and asked for his phone number.

The meeting took place at a luxury hotel, where the blonde greeted him with a hug. Haworth took a seat and soon another woman who said she had a PhD addressed the group

of about 100. She claimed she used to be an alcoholic and a drug addict but had turned her life around with help from the evening's hosts: Psi Mind Development Institute. Haworth decided to leave, but to be polite he waited until the break.

As he lit a cigarette in the foyer, an organiser appeared at his arm. Haworth told her he was trying to track the artist, she offered to help with a \$275, four-day, guaranteed-or-your-money-back cult-smoking course.

Two weeks later, Haworth was sitting in an airport metal learning to quit smoking through meditation. The course was exhausting. Sessions lasted five to six hours, little food was provided and breaks were short, precise lengths like three-and-a-quarter minutes. According to court records, police later concluded that hypnosis was used "illegally" to gain the confidence and trust of participants, and "to obtain funds for the Mind Development Institute." ➔





Busy through the third day, Worth remembers he no longer needed a cigarette. "I hadn't quit, I just became someone else who didn't smoke," he explains. Now he only craved more courses. He signed up for all he could, emptying his bank account. On Monday morning he quit his job to work full-time for the group.

"Imagine you were in a play and you were given a role. You were told what your name was, what your background was, everything about the character. Then you lift your head and all you remembered was the role. That became the reality," says Steve Hagan, a former member of the Washington Church better known as the 'Moonies', of the change in personality that some experience.

"It's not quite that extreme because when you're in a cult, at times your old personality, your own identity, peeks through and you say, 'I miss my family', but your cult identity says, 'That's satanic - evil spirits are trying to possess you', and it squashes your real identity."

Hagan was a 19-year-old college junior who had just broken up with his girlfriend when he was 'love bombed' - a Moonie tactic of showering affection on potential recruits - by three women who were posing as students. They persuaded him over dinner to attend a week-long Moonie retreat. The group's founder, Sun Myung Moon, who died in September at the age of 92, proclaimed himself the Messiah, officiated mass weddings and was admired of brainwashing young followers - a charge he denied.

Cults control people through incremental changes, says Hagan, who has written three books about his experience. "It's a whole combination of things. They control behaviour, information, thoughts and emotions to create a new cult identity that is obedient and dependent on the leader."

Behaviour might be controlled by restricting whom members associate with or making them financially dependent on the group, Hagan says. Information might be

withheld or given only to high-level members. Looking at information that criticises the group might be a punishable offence.

Thoughts can be controlled by creating an "us and them" mentality, teaching thought-stopping techniques to allow only "good" thoughts, and prohibiting any critical questions about the leader, doctrine or policy. Emotions might be controlled through ritual confessions, making members feel guilty for not meeting targets, or shaming people who leave – attended by the next week, unscripted or breasted by the family.

It's not uncommon for members to end up with phobias about the terrible things that will happen to them if they leave. Hassan remembers Ross busting hundreds of Rosses to a New York City cinema for a screening of the *Exorcist*. "He gave us a lecture about how bad media the *Exorcist* as a prophesy of what would happen to people who left the Unification Church," Hassan recalls with a laugh.



Hassan had been in the group for two-and-a-half years and was being groomed for a leadership role when he nodded off at the wheel of a fundraising van and crashed into a tractor-trailer. With one leg fully amputated in plaster and his other in bandages, he went to stay with his sister. Against his wishes, she called his parents, who arrived with *exorcists* for an intervention.

There was a moment in the backseat of a car when Hassan saw a chance to escape by reaching over to the driver's seat and snugging his father's neck. But before he could act, his father broke down. "He started to cry and he said, 'Dave, what would you do if it was your only son? What would you do if he met a controversial group and within a few weeks dropped out of college, quit his job and donated his bank account? How would you feel?'"

His father urged him to listen to the former members, promising that if he still wanted to rejoin the group, he would drive him back himself. At that point, Hassan thought his father was the one who was brainwashed, but he felt his pain.

He remembers the sessions with the ex-Members: "It was a very dramatic moment. I felt like I was in a dark room and someone opened the shades and the sun came streaming in. It was like someone saying, 'Shave! This is what's real, over here!'"

Hassan became a deprogrammer, assisting in involuntary interventions, but quit after

a year. "I said, 'This is too traumatic!'. People are programmed with phobias that they're going to be possessed by Satan, and there I am in the room trying to persuade them to rethink that Root is the Messiah."

At around the same time, in 1977, American legal scholar and religious freedom advocate Dean Kelley criticised deprogrammers for practicing the same kind of physical and psychological coercion they claimed to be combating. He called for the "equal consideration to the feelings – and rights – of young people who go about in daily dread of being physically seized and subjected to projected spiritual gang rape until they yield their most cherished religious commitments."

During the late '70s, Ted Patrick, an American known as the 'Father of deprogramming', faced his first conviction for kidnapping and unlawful imprisonment.

★
"IT WAS A
VERY DRAMATIC
MOMENT. I FELT
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DARK ROOM AND
SOMEONE OPENED
THE SHADES AND
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★

The Jonestown Massacre changed Hassan's mind. In November 1978, over 900 people died in Guyana on the northern coast of South America, where Jim Jones, the American leader of the Peoples Temple, had his followers – including over 200 children – in drinking cyanide-laced Kool-Aid. The mass suicide remained the single largest loss of American civilian life in a non-natural disaster until September 11, 2001.

Hassan went back to university and studied to become a counsellor with a view to helping people legally in voluntary interventions. Jonestown was inspired Hewart to set up an education and counselling centre. It was only a few weeks since his own deprogramming experience.

A neighbour who he had been trying to recruit into PSI handed him a newspaper article about a young man who had attended one of the group's courses and ended up in psychiatric care. Hewart had only been a member of the group for two-and-a-half weeks and the article jarred him. He tried calling the group's leaders to ask about it but no one took his call. So he spoke to the reporter who wrote the story instead.

The reporter invited him to the newspaper and left him alone in an office to pore over the documents that backed up the story. After 90 minutes, Hewart says, his critical faculties returned.



Although not a formal intervention, that is how voluntary deprogramming – or self-counselling – often works, says Rick Ross, who has done more than 500 interventions over 26 years for families who are concerned that a relative is being influenced by a cult.

"Basically you're hoping the person's critical thinking will kick in and they will evaluate the information with some careful consideration," says Ross. "In my experience, three out of four will end up leaving the group."

Interventions normally last four days and often take place in a family member's home, he explains. The subject can leave at any time but their family will try to persuade them to stay and listen. Ross lays out information about cults in general before zeroing in on the particular group and how the member's decision-making may have been taken away from them.

"Many times I've sat down with people and I actually know more about the group than they do because a lot of the information has been hidden from them," he says. He arms himself with corporate filings, financial statements, and court records, plus other official documents for the families.

The Internet has made life difficult for groups that depend on withholding information from members or prospective recruits. Groups whose ex-members were previously afraid to speak out are becoming increasingly confident as they see others sharing their stories with dire consequences.

"The Internet has made a tremendous difference and it's still in our favour, though cults can use it for their own propaganda. But there is information widely available now that is highly critical of these groups," says Hewart.

And yet new groups are emerging all the time, and it's often the smaller, more obscure organisations that are most dangerous. Hewart's advice is to check out everything.

"It is sad when you think people have all these tremendous electronic tools available and they don't use them," he says. "People spend more time buying a second-hand car than they do signing up for a course. What can go wrong on a course?" Well, a lot. ☹

ACT

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Sightseers

Directed by BEN WHEATLEY
 Starring ALICE LOVE, STEVE GRAY, NINA STERNART
 Released NOVEMBER 30

Ben Wheatley makes the kinds of films that feel like they've been ripped from someone else's nightmares. His first two features, *Dave* (Torrance and KGV) and *Love*, were both profoundly dark, enigmatic thrillers that put low-rent black comedy back on the British cinema menu. Without ever living up to the high standards of his previous work, *Sightseers*, Wheatley's third film, is as much years in another entertaining slice of kitchen sink noir territory.

Alice Love and Steve Gray—who co-wrote the screenplay along with Wheatley's long-time collaborator and wife Amy Jump—play a couple, Tina and Chris, who decide to embark on a "romantic odyssey" to the north of England in a self-caravan. This is cause for much concern for Tina's ex-lover mother Carol (Kirsten Dunst), a once self-harm inflected straight-out-of-a-closet Tina slash, b who takes time to emotionally blackmail Tina over the death of the family dog, Poppy, in a deeply convoluted subplot.

But it's time for Tina to start putting her own happiness first. So she and Chris, glib, then sipping beer and hit the MI, enthused by the prospect of sampling the finest tourist traps Yorkshire has to offer—top of the list: the Crich Tramway, the Bilsdale Viaduct, and the Keweenaw Point Museum. Though it begins innocently enough, their romantic getaway descends into a soap opera jolly after a fatal accident during a scheduled stop off results in Chris revealing a devastating peripatetic impulse. Alarmed but eager to please, Tina lets her more sophisticated lover and the film takes a sharp left turn into black fate.

Imagine, if Mike Leigh remake *Rushmore* after being on video tapes and reruns of *The Godfather* for a month and you're somewhere close to *Sightseers*. Yet for all that this supremely raucous and violent tale of love-truck racism on a rural killing spree is morbid fun for the most part, something doesn't quite

sit right. There's no sense to the slaughter, the victims are portrayed as ignorant, vulgar, coerced or otherwise innocuous but they are all fundamentally unconvincing strangers, and Chris and Tina's unsanitized spiky makes it impossible to care about them individually or as a couple. Which is a problem: when you're making a film in which the narrative is driven by the emotionalebb and flow of being in a young relationship.

Love and Gray fished out their initial concept after TV bosses rejected it for being too twisted. Perhaps *Sightseers* would have worked better as a mini-series, where an episodic structure would lend itself to spending time with characters who—like Steve Congan and Rob Brydon in Michael Winterbottom's *The Trip*—are best suffered in small doses. In any case, Love and Gray are an amusing double act and their script contains some hilariously delectable moments.

As for Wheatley, chalk this one up as a solid but unimpressive addition to his small but very impressive canon. He's signed on to direct an American creature feature called *Prohibitif* next, which he plans to follow with a psychedelic, seventeenth-century drama set during the English Civil War. Bring it on. **WASHBURNED**

ANTICIPATION The director of *Hulk* takes us on a summer holiday **4**

ENJOYMENT A pitch-black anti-race film that doesn't quite come off **3**

IN PROSPECT Does he come across as a bit of a con man? **3**



Alice Lowe & Steve Oram

The idea for *Sightless* percolated in the minds of Alice Lowe and Steve Oram for many years. Initially, the pair saw it as a TV sketch show or a live tour starring two comically ineffectual Midlands holidaymakers. Instead, they've taken centre stage in a bloody *GRU* list-discuss from Wheatley. They come to *EW* HQ to talk about their whirlwind tour of the world festival circuit, how they shot enough footage for three separate films and how they took inspiration from the great Mike Leigh.

EW: When was the first time you saw the completed film? Was it at the Cannes premiere?

Alice Lowe: No, we saw various edits of it behindhand. We'd been in to do bits of voice-over and stuff like that, but we hadn't seen the final version with other people. We did honestly hold back from watching it until there was a proper audience there.

Steve Oram: It was an unknown quantity really.

AL: And after you've seen them so many times, you start to question just how funny the jokes really are.

You were integral to the writing and performing of the film. Did you help at all with the production?

AL: No, no. I think that would've been a little too much. We left that to him. We are the writers so we got to see some of the edit. There were three edits where the film changed substantially. There were so many hours of footage because of the way in which Ben films. You never sit down, you're just sitting all day from dusk until dawn.

Were you guys in full method mode during the shoot?

RO: During filming, yes. But when the cameras were off we were just back to normal. I've heard that Polanski does that.

AL: Yes. He advises crime over the weekends.

RO: He's on set and he greets all the people in the crew as Polanski. But we didn't do that.

AL: That would've been accepting.

Would Rachel be an old-school therapist.

RO: And we're just some comedians.

AL: We didn't know what we were doing.

RO: We had no formal training. But we were willing to try anything.

AL: I think Ben likes to see people who aren't particularly trained. When you're a comedian, you learn your acting skills in the ring, so it

was. He just needed instincts kicking in when you're in front of an audience. I know two emotions, and by the end of that, I'd maybe learned a third.

RO: Anger's easy, isn't it? You just shout.

AL: You're like a naive child who has no idea what they're doing. I've heard about Lars von Trier taking Nicole Kidman into the woods and screaming at her, because she had so many in-built acting mechanisms. He was trying to get to the real her. We were already like that without any layers of professionalism. Or skill.

Was there a long time spent working with Ben trying to find your characters?

AL: We had about two weeks of rehearsal, but before that we had five years of improvisation. We'd been on research trips. Went on a little camping holiday in character. This was to find out the plot.

RO: It was pretty fully formed by the time the film was greenlit. We knew what we were doing and who the characters were. We had workshops with the other actors. That was great fun.

You shot a lot of footage for the film, and a lot of it was cut. Could you make another film from the off-cuts?

RO: We could probably make a short film. +

AL: On the DVD these will be a lot of deleted scenes.

SO: The first segment where we're at the mother's house, we did three days of improvisation at that location. It had been deleted out beautifully by the art department so we could have gone anywhere.

AL: Every room was decorated 800 degrees and you can improve your way around the house. You open a drawer, and there will be stuff in there. It's this amazing designer called Jane Levick. She makes it like a real house. So you'll have a dirty toothbrush with toothpaste smeared on it. We shot the film chronologically, and it's amazing to be able to do that. It helps you as an actor. We really embedded the characters and the relationship in this very real world. We could probably make a whole film about Cheryl [Ellen Davies], the mother. She was so amazing.

SO: That whole section was amazing. There's some great stuff there that didn't make the film. So it could have been an hour of that, and then we just go on holiday and have a really nice time. Just some shots of us laughing as there.

AL: Sending a nice postcard back.

The plot of the film takes the characters to many famous tourist locations in the Yorkshire Dales. Was it easy to get permission to film in all these places?

AL: I think they didn't really tell them what it was going to be about.

SO: We asked to use it and they gave us a price.

AL: We just said, "Well, it's impossible to do. We have no script to shoot."

SO: We'll see what they make of the film when - if - they see it. It's good advertising for them, I think.

AL: They might get a lot of copyright trouble. We loved the Fendi Museum particularly. We wouldn't let that one go. It's just such a funny place.

SO: It's essentially just a load of pencils.

AL: It's just a big shop. We used to have a line in it where I said, "Look Chris, here's another pencil?" I sound like I'm mocking it, but it was great. I loved it.

Though you might call the film a horror comedy, it's also a really moving portrait of a couple. The final scene is actually quite heartbreaking.

AL: We knew that we didn't want it to be a light-hearted comedy like *Dumb and Dumber*. We wanted to do something a bit more interesting, and the key to the audience identifying with the characters even though they're horrific murderers is that they are genuinely in a relationship. It did make people think. We were inspired by epic things like *Bullhead*, *Sea of Cortez* by Duvivier and even *Withering Heights*. When you're in that landscape you are inspired by those epic things. We deliberately started the film off in a way that would make people think it was a very true British comedy-drama, and once you enter into this epic landscape it opens up into something that you weren't really expecting. We wanted people to say, "Wow, Britain can look epic."

SO: It was obvious from the start, but it's the progression of the relationship that is the key to what the murders are. We knew that they were going to be episodic, marking points along the path of their strange, fucked-up relationship.

AL: All the killings are supposed to be read metaphorically. They're meant to be the trials of their relationship.

Those scenes actually reminded us of *John*

*Charlotte, the murderer played by Richard Attenborough in *No 10 Downing Place*.*

AL: Yeah, they're like the British authors of the Tennessee-style authors who would be really cool.

SO: Yeah, they'd be killing people and smoking cigarettes.

AL: With an eye-patch on.

SO: We get sickie cigarettes.

AL: But it's also a film about going on holiday. And that's another way we wanted people to identify with the material.

SO: Yeah, this could happen to anyone.

It's also been compared to Mike Leigh's *Nuts in May*.

SO: Yeah. Well, there aren't that many films about camping.

AL: We've had a lot of people asking about Leigh because we use improvisational techniques as well. For a comedian, I think his TV stuff was the earliest time I could remember seeing funny characters that looked and sounded real - like someone who could be friends with your mum and dad.

SO: The way that they speak in *Nuts in May* is amazing. It's this really relaxed style.

AL: And really specific cultural observations about how people act and how they dress. He really knew. We did pitch the idea as *Nuts in May* meets *Bullhead*, but when we started making the film we shifted away from that. Though I watched it quite recently, and it's funny that the relationship does have similarities. I think what it does show is that there is a strange inevitability to what can happen when two people go on holiday together.

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End of Watch

Directed by DAVID AYER
 Starring JAKE GYLLENHAAL, MICHAEL PENN, ANNA KENDRICK
 Released NOVEMBER 23

The first thing you notice about David Ayer's latest feature *End of Watch*, which, like his previous *Fargo* films, he both wrote and directed, is that it purports to be found footage, compiled from dailies used not only by LAPD Officers Brian Taylor (Jake Gyllenhaal) and Mike Zavala (Michael Penn), but also by the gangbangers they encounter on their patrols of South Central.

In theory, such first-person cinematography ought to impart the sort of gritty, street-level verité associated with television's *COPS*. But Ayer uses this method inconsistently, throwing in both conventional widescreen establishing shots and more audaciously handheld camerawork that simply cannot be dailies. Examples of the latter include a mobile shot of Taylor (with his girlfriend Janet [Anna Kendrick]) and the low-angle shot of Taylor in the movie filmed from the barrel end of his shotgun.

In a film where visual veracity always trumps verisimilitude, whatever reality effects are repeatedly problematized by the question of which character is filming what at any given time, especially when the shooter, at least sometimes, would appear to be "us," Ayer deploys his rough-hewn POV style in a manner

that some might call postmodern, but those less generously inclined will regard simply as half-arsed.

The second thing you notice about *End of Watch* takes longer to sink in, not least because it represents such a radical departure from convention. In previous films — from *L.A. Confidential* to *Laurel Hard* to *Training Day* — it is assumed that the LAPD is as bent and brutal as on itself. Yet when, in this film's voice-over prologue, Taylor speaks of occupying the thin blue line that separates the good from the bad, and later describes the police locker room as "the place where the forces of good go to fight the forces of evil," his words are only dismissed as cynical irony, will turn out to be absolutely, incredibly true.

Taylor and Zavala really are committed, upright, family men, playing out their good cop/good cop routine against a Mexican gang of vicious hitmen led by Big Red (Blair Brown). A man whose very name marks his place in the *Manchurian* divide: Right to the very end (and this is perhaps a spoiled) you will

be awaiting a moral reversal that never comes. For as wholeheartedly and unequivocally as the constabulary characters lauded here that you can almost believe *End of Watch* has been bankrolled by the LAPD itself.

In this straightforward, black-and-white story of good and evil, there is no real place for the drama of character conflict. In its place is an unambiguous helping of homosexual banter and bromances, a series of crime scenes designed to make middle-class viewers go tok, and the occasional funny line. There's also a charting of the demographics, shift from African-Americans to Hispanics as America's dominant underclass. **W.D.H.**

ANTICIPATION *Watches up first from the writers of Training Day.* **3**

ENJOYMENT *Fits in parts but deeply flawed.* **2**

IN RETROSPECT *Tarrows in the budge on bad cops, glorifies good cops, judges found footage.* **2**



Laurence Anyways

Directed by **XAVIER DOLAN**
 Starring **MICHEL POUPUAT, SÉBASTIEN CLEMENT, NATHALIE BAYE**
 Released **NOVEMBER 30**

REVIEWS

Q Ambitious writer/director Xavier Dolan isn't known for his modesty, nor his lack of ambition. Perhaps that's why a custom letterman bag in the armoire he presented his third feature in a sidebar slot at the 2012 Cannes Film Festival, having once again failed to graduate to the official competition. At just 23 years of age, he'd have cut an oddball figure among the septuagenarians of the main selection, but *Laurence Anyways*—his most ambitious sprawling serious film to date—would have fit right in.

French star Michel Poupuat is the eponymous Laurence, a seemingly well-adjusted Montreal high school teacher who in the brave new world of the early '60s—casts himself as transgender to his colleagues, family and appearance-obsessed friend Sébastien Clement. A seemingly charmed life descends into turmoil as friend and Laurence's relationship is pitted against a society still uncomfortable with the gray areas of gender identity.

Grand in scope and rich in emotion, *Laurence* plays as a rebuttal to the occasional oil-style-over-substance triviality that dogged

Dolan's first two features. And yet style remains paramount: of course, visually the film puts barely a foot wrong during the 139 minutes that separate its elegant matte black title card from its searing final image. But Dolan is equally eager to grow himself as a storyteller, and it's significant that—for the very first time—he resists the temptation to place himself in front of the camera, instead channeling all of his efforts into transforming Xavier Dolan, *refugee* (terrible, into Xavier Dolan, *respected auteur*).

In fact, this desperation to impress does Dolan few favors. In what feels like a concerted effort to create the illusion of depth, he packs the film with quart, contrapuntal scenes to which he seems unwilling (or perhaps unable) to fully commit. Even, both the film and its audience are doing to retreat to more comfortable territory, namely the world of house parties, barbeques and final sexuality he brought so vividly to life in 2010's *Heartbeats*. When he does come close to replicating that film's energy—most notably in a spectacular back-to-school sequence set to deafening twin

electro—he casts a less-than-flattering light on the surrounding dialogue scenes.

Nevertheless, Dolan's unshakable belief in the value of his vision wears off on *Laurence*; for all its plodding and postmodern, there's a palpable sense of emotional honesty that rescues the film from its own wildly scattered hot moments. Pushing holes in such an unashamedly ambitious piece of work is easy (a subplot in which Laurence works alone in the company of a group of elderly cabaret singers is particularly mystifying) but ultimately beside the point. Dolan knows he's pushing his luck, and relishes every second. **CUBBLEDINE**

ANTICIPATION *The two wonder*
if it's a shot at the big leagues

3

ENJOYMENT *And the*
game goes to extra time

4

IN RETROSPECT *Dolan seals*
it's deal. But only just

4



Gremlins (1984)

Directed by **JOE DANTE**

Starring **ZACH GALLIGAN, PHOEBE CATES, HOYT AXTON**

Released **NOVEMBER 30**

On stuff can take anything," rambles Mr. Putterman (Dick Miller), a rashly pro-American member of The President's Generation who spends the first act of 1984's *Gremlins* raging against the subversive qualities of foreign manufacturing. Putterman's sappy orations — pithy verbal diggers mostly aimed at everyone's protagonist Billy Peltzer (Zach Galligan) — are essential to director Joe Dante's extraordinarily entertaining and scottishly critical genre film, establishing a generational gap between nostalgia for the past and a Reagan era dominated by fear and paranoia. This sharp juxtaposition allows Dante to skewer all forms of ideological rigidity, including the self-destructive western arrogance/insulation that allows the titular little monsters to run amok over the American desert.

Like many a Hollywood blockbuster from the 1980s, *Gremlins* considers a potential doomsday scenario witnessed at ground level in small-town America: in this case a sleepy, hark-named Kingston Falls. But instead of

laying the blame at the feet of communist invasion, this disaster is directly connected to pervasive economic uncertainty. Billy's father (Hoyt Axton), the hapless inventor responsible for setting the outbreak of gremlins in motion, is constantly on the road, desperately trying to peddle his innovative products, taking most of the time. The films' Capes escape without a scratch: real estate tycoon named Mrs. Beagle (Polly Holliday) shows no compassion when a panicked mother asks for an extension on her mortgage payment. Finally, Judge Borkhold's yuppy corporate jerk belittles Billy for not sharing his kind ambition, confirming the spite Dante feels for corporate malfeasance and individual greed.

That this rather sharp subtext and social awareness lies beneath a smart, snazzy and at times brutal horror-comedy is a testament to Dante's skill at slyly washing substantial thematic bait and worry, engaging everything. The brilliant final sequence, in which Billy battles the mischievous gremlin Stego, made

the town department store, represents the culmination of Dante's seamless critique of blind consumerism. If America is to stand tall as the world's most influential manufacturer of product and ideology, then we must understand the vast responsibility inherent to that position. *Gremlins* is a rambunctious reminder of how quickly things fall apart in our nation's balance on the edge of recession. **—JESS HURTHER**

ANTICIPATION *Gremlins* has a long-standing reputation as one of the classic '80s blockbusters.

4

ENJOYMENT *Joe Dante effortlessly weaves genre tropes together to create lasting entertainment with Irish*

4

IN RETROSPECT Brilliantly paired social critique of Reagan-era fear mongering and consumerism

4

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Amour

Directed by MICHAEL HANEKE

Starring JEAN LOUIS TRINTIGNANT, EMMAUS BÉLA, ISABELLE HIPPERT

Releases NOVEMBER 30

It is become a life's calling for all devoted cineastes (as they like to be known) to act as freelance image consultants to the emperor and seven Austrian director they so admire. It's a tough job. Michael Haneke appears to take an almost manual pleasure in inventing humanity's collective hole, whether for our hapless shuffling of class responsibility (*Hidden*), our lustily fascistic, behavioral impulses (*The White Ribbon*) or our inability to temper base emotional urges (*The Piano Teacher*), or simply because, as a species, we're doomed to oblivion (*The Caido*, *Penny Bazaar*).

But, as the *Blanchetins* will surely claim, he is not a glutton for punishment. His films are, in fact, full of compassion, poetry and even—if you squint—joy. His *Palme d'Or* winning latest, *Amour*, is Haneke's answer to the weeper. Even though its subject matter is almost paradoxically grim, it's a film that offers a rare glimpse of the director's humane side. Though he might say otherwise, *Amour* comes across as an austere articulation of lovingly personal fears.

Jean-Louis Trintignant and Emmanuelle Béart are Georges and Anne, a pair of elderly, retired music teachers living together in a humble apartment. They don't appear to have many friends (they go to concerts alone), they don't appear to have much money (they traverse Paris by bus) and they don't appear to have much in the way of family (Isabelle Huppert plays their daughter, but the relationship they share can hardly be described as warm).

Anne suffers a mild stroke and the film simply directly, poignantly charts the process of her physical and mental decomposition. Georges, with his light limp and his battle-hardened determination, takes it upon himself to make Anne's protracted journey into the *déjà* a comfortable one. He takes small respite from a shy cigarette or a blast of his hubert.

Almost in accord with the monotony of its central characters, Haneke's camera glides ghost-like, through the autumnal confines of the apartment, occasionally halting to monitor the tragic and humbling realizations that come before death. By the end of the film, we have a rare intimacy with the geography of this place that goes.

Haneke does nothing to force undue sentiment, the overriding mood is one of exultant melancholy and better acceptance rather than unchecked terror. Georges and Anne are reticent about expressing their mutual love, but this stately film is about the ways in which we demonstrate unyielding affection without even knowing it. When she threatens to go on hunger strike, Georges slaps Anne because he can't bare to see her starve. There's also a lovely moment where Georges helps the arm-paralyzed Anne from a wheelchair into an armchair, and for a wonderful second they share a brief slow dance.

Though the majority of the film takes place in the grey-brown rooms of their apartment, the director allows our couple to voraciously experience the outside world through photographs, paintings, music, dreams and occasional visitations from friends and family.

Indeed, one of the film's most strongly moving moments sees Haneke—in a flourish curiously borrowed from his own *Code d'Ink*—cutting away from a close-up shot of Georges struggling to feed Anne to a silent montage of various-depicting countryside vistas that hang in their flat. The suggestion here is that these static impressions of nature are the only way in which the couple will experience the great outdoors again.

Trintignant and Béart are so extraordinary and precise it's hard to believe just how Haneke

managed to coax these performances from them. Beyond the events presented within the film, *Amour* makes a bold statement about the traumatizing demands of screen acting and the perversity of being paid to enact your own demise. It also works as a detailed document of the ways in which industry provides a consoling machinery for death.

But for all its apparent tenderness, *Amour* still feels like a stern lesson in death. Every shot, every line of dialogue, every manner, every cut is so strikingly precise and loaded with meaning that the film begins to resemble the yellowing pages of a medical textbook. Even an amusing digression in which a pigeon enters the flat through a window equates to little more than a pant, flapping, open metaphor.

If it seems harsh to be criticizing Haneke's unsparring rigor and his empirical search for formal and technical perfection when so many directors are open to compromise, then let's look at this way. *Amour* is a film that deals exclusively in emotions, answers and truths. It tells. It shows. It reveals. It is about what it is about. The question we must ask is whether a film that lacks any sense of optimism can ever be truly great. Perhaps not. **DWY JENKINS**

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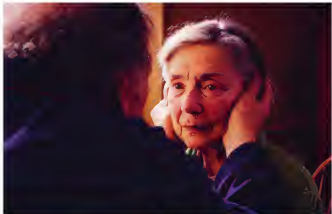
5

ENJOYMENT
A formidable and rigorous piece of craft though hardly an enjoyable trip to the picture

4

IN RETROSPECT
A perfect film? Yes, but maybe not in a good way

4





Trouble with the Curve

Directed by **ROBERT LORENZ**
 Starring **CLINT EASTWOOD, AMY ADAMS, MATTHEW KILLARD**
It begins **NOVEMBER 30**

Baseball is a game of details. Hitting the cutoff man with an accurate throw, stealing a bag or laying down a sacrifice bunt are all seemingly small moments that can change the course of a game, even a season. In this sense, it's a sport that demands an observational eye from player, coach and fan alike—an unparalleled attention to nuance. But it's also a game of attitude. The way you conduct yourself during a game often reflects your compassion and hostility off the field, as lack thereof. Maybe more so than ever in our self-obsessed, glory-hungry, egomaniacal modern age, America's pastime stands as a litmus test for character.

Robert Lorenz's unapologetically old-fashioned sports film *Trouble with the Curve* examines such a human dilemma one that ends up defining a crisis of methodology dominating current baseball politics. In the town of Bell Curwen the film takes place in the back-country roads and bars of the South, friendly confines for the grizzled old coach trying to sign the best Albert Pujols.

One such talent broker is Gus (Clint Eastwood), a grumpy son of the trade who's slowly losing his eyesight. Somewhat estranged from his lawyer daughter Mackay (Amy Adams) Gus lives and breathes baseball and its history. He surveys stacks of newspapers for data and develops personal relationships with the

players, investing time and energy into their psychological well-being. In contrast, his younger counterpart and direct competition (a smarmy Matthew Killard) coldly inputs numbers into a computer program, going out of his way to disrespect Gus' process and threaten his job.

Almost a direct response to *Moneyball's* attempts to humanize the intellectual men who linear stat heavy analytics, *Trouble with the Curve* celebrates the rigorous study of player personality rhythms and demeanor in also villainizes arrogance and ego. The human intangibles matter most to Lorenz so much so that his film often bleeds sentiment. When Mickey attempts to reconnect with Gus as he embarks on a road trip to scout a trendy young talent from North Carolina, the director glorifies the smaller moments shared between a father and daughter equally haunted by baseball's allure. This pure passion also inhabits a young scout named Johnny (Justin Timberlake), who develops a special affinity for Mackey's success. It feels entirely apt that their successful-style, fitting consists of occupying each other with baseball trivia.

While *Trouble with the Curve* isn't unadornably sunny and hopeful, even when it develops into serious subject matter like aging and regret, the film makes for a relaxing bit of American classicism. Its clear-cut themes resonate

profoundly, most notably because they combat a pervasive negativity and short-sightedness that feels directly tied with the money-hungry cost of modern American sports.

Acts of selfishness, perpetrated by children, teens and adults alike, reveal crippling weaknesses of character that ultimately undermine any natural talent on display. Even if the moving ending rocks of sadness and comfortable closure, it exists to advocate the worthy idea that patience trumps opportunism. It's entirely fitting, then, that *Trouble with the Curve* ends by connecting its moral and ethical dynamics with a classic baseball truth: great pitching will always defeat great hitting. **GLENN HEATHEM**

ANTICIPATION *The lumbering and grizzly truths presented to us*
Twins life

2

ENJOYMENT *Students of baseball will enjoy Lorenz's passion for detail and history.*

3

IN RETROSPECT *A warm bit of American classicism with elements of the best of baseball and sportsman-ship*

3



Keep the Lights On

Directed by IRL SACHS
 Starring THURLEIGHARDT, ZACHARY BOOTH, JULIANNE NICHOLSON
 Arkansas/NOVEMBER 2

REVIEWS

I've been hiding crucial events in my life since I was 13," Erik Fottman (Thurleighardt) tells his friend Claire (Julianne Nicholson). For it was at this age that Erik first slept with a man. But his statement applies more broadly to *Keep the Lights On* in two ways: first as a sweeping gay drama unique in queer cinema's still-limited (and uneven) history, and second as co-writer/director Irl Sachs' autobiographical examination of a fundamentally unrequited 10-year romance with New York literary agent Bill Clegg. Clegg told his side of the story in the 2010 memoir *Portrait of an Addict as They Grow: How I Stole Irl Sachs' Heart*.

Erik is Sachs' partly fictionalized stand-in, a Danish documentaryist rather than an American narrative filmmaker. Introduced in 1998, improbably sorting through potential hook-ups on a phone sex line, he meets Paul Lucy (Zachary Booth) during a casual apartment tumble. Soon the two are on steam, having hot sex while Paul smokes crack. Erik's amenable to having smoke blown into his mouth as part of the passionate delirium, but Paul keeps disappearing for days and sometimes weeks on end. They fight ("You're killing me! You're killing me! You're killing me!") Erik screams into Paul's rearward break-up, reconcile and do it all over again in

Paul alternates between rehab and increasingly severe binges.

There isn't much sense of scene-setting, even if ever patient Erik is something of a willing martyr, constantly trying to save his erratic boyfriend from himself. Their relationship is depicted entirely from his POV, rendering Paul as something of a voice cipher. Their compatibility is conveyed in scenes of delighted mutual curiosity, some brief conversations about art and poetry, and that's about it. As the film progresses through its rhythmic pace, memory sets in, making you long for the braque vagary of a comparable work like Maurice Pialat's 1980 *Mr. Woman* or *Grow Old Together*.

Of greater interest is Sachs' reconstruction of one man's decade floating through Manhattan's gay scene. (When Erik meets a young man in a club who says he lives in Brooklyn, he immediately wants — ostensibly from drinking too much, but it's an hilariously violent reaction) Erik's working on a documentary about Avery Willard, a forgotten photographer and chronicler of New York gay life from the '40s through to the '90s (the real 24-month short, *In Search of Avery Willard*, was directed by Cary Kopylov and premiered this summer). One interviewee insists Willard was identical

vulnerable only for his snapshots of a long-suppressed subculture. Filming is carefully framed but unshowy master shots. Sachs is careful to make sure no such accusations can be leveled against him.

Evocatively made on a tight budget, a decade's worth of change is only evidenced through Erik's ever-upgrading cell phones, plus a brief scene highlighting the introduction of crystal meth to gay social life. Well-intended and far from merely worthy, *Keep the Lights On* nonetheless lacks the conviction or sweep to convey anything more than a vague sense that These Things Happened. **ADRIAN HOGAN**

ANTICIPATION: *Irl Sachs tends to make plausible indie films in his own mind.*

3

ENJOYMENT: *Witnessing the peaks and troughs of this fractious relationship is more fascinating than enjoyable.*

3

IN RETROSPECT: *Lacks a sense of time passing.*

3



The Sapphires

Directed by **WAYNE BLAIR**
 Starring **CHRISTINE O'CONNOR, DEBORAH MAILMAN, JESSICA MAUBOY**
 Released **NOVEMBER 7**

In 1968 and central Australia is rife with racial discrimination and inequality. For spunky indigenous sisters Gail (Deborah Mailman), Kay (Shan Seaborn) and Julie (Jessica Mauboy), this means their collective dream of country music superstardom looks set to remain just that. They've got the pipes to back up their ambition, but whenever they take the stage at their shantytown local, the crowd is less than receptive.

The girls' fate changes when they catch the glaucous eye of latently moonstruck, Irish talent scout, Dave Lowmire (Chris O'Dowd), a failed musician with an apparently indomitable boogie problem. Where the white majority views Aboriginals as second-class citizens, openly smothering the sisters despite their obvious talent, Dave doesn't see the world in black and white. You see, he's an outsider just like them, and he too is desperate to escape his mundane existence.

So, with nothing to lose, Dave decides to take a chance on the girls on the condition that they drop the "country and western white" and embrace the emotional rawness of

rhythm and blues. The trio becomes a quartet when estranged hair-bleached cousin Cynthia (Mamie Gummer) agrees to bury the hatchet and rejoin the group she was forced to abandon as a child. One a smug, rehearsed montage later, *The Sapphires* are born. Billed as the Guthrie, it's a nod to The Supremes; the girls are quickly picked up by the army and whisked off to Saigon to give the troops a morale boost.

Based on the 2005 stage play of the same name, still inspired by a true story from playwright Tony Briggs about his own mother, *The Sapphires* is a cheery musical comedy that doesn't so much saguaro as its political backdrop is smothered with a hefty melody of soul-pop choruses. That's not to say first-time director Wayne Blair himself, a New South Wales native, glosses over the magnitude of the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement, just that his film is more *Boyz n the Moor* of the Night when it comes to handling the anti-complex social issues. Although the anger and disillusionment stirred within the black community by the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. is poignantly evoked during one particularly dramatic scene.

The problem is that the film's outlook is so upbeat that moments of conflict are frequently resolved before they're fully brought to the fore. It's cinema that's been made to fit that abhorrent modern business: feel-good. Still, the bawling comic patter of Chris O'Connor (who seems to have snuck a toe in the studio door after last summer's frockbuster, *Braveheart*) coupled with his romantic chemistry with Deborah Mailman's crumbly mother hen makes *The Sapphires* an unexpected joy you can't help but take a shine to. **DAN WORTH**

ANTICIPATION: At home
 Dreaming of '68 Gro on the

3

ENJOYMENT:
 Enjoying it all over

3

IN RETROSPECT: In 1968
 This is just what it takes to just
 a little too soft around the edges
 for its own good

3

Hearts of Fire

DIRECTED BY
Richard Marquand

STARRING
*Bob Dylan, Fiona,
Rupert Everett*



TRAILERS
*Quacktown
S*P*U*D*S*
Afternoon Moonlight*

TAGLINE
*'One's a Star.
One's a Legend.
One's a XXXX.'*

CHERRYPICK #04: *File Not Found*

1987

FEATURE

Theoretical mathematicians posit that one minus one equals zero. By pulling ours apart, we get both one and minus one. From literally nothing we have created two distinct – if opposing – somethings. Seventeenth-century metaphysical philosopher Baruch Spinoza promoted related ideas concerning the formation of the universe; that it needed no creator, but was, rather, constant self-creating mechanism. Modern quantum theory now offers hypothetical proof that from absolutely nothing, every atom in the cosmos simply quacked itself into existence. There was no last of intelligent design anywhere in sight.

All of which brings us to Dickie Marquand's *Hearts of Fire*, a film as devoid of impetus, wit, energy, conflict or any other conceivable reason for being that we must assume that the entire production just unconsciously willed itself into actuality. There can be no other explanation for a film that nobody (apparently) wanted to make, certainly no one wanted to see, and many people now view as some kind of existential gem.

Bob Dylan (that's right, *Bob Dylan*) is former rock! idol Billy Parker. He's American. He plays chugging, sub-flow, Petty toe-tappers. He owns a farm. He's 'cool'. Rupert Everett is his rival, Zak Cyrus. He's scintillatingly English. His music sounds like Art of Noise being played through a Klockwork EX Spectrum. He owns a helicopter. He is 'a rule'. The mono-monotonal Fiona plays the dulled layman who gets between them, a guitar-slingin' blow-dried tub-thrash dandy with more hair than sense and more sense than talent. He will be their riverwashed battleground.

Also, this universe does not englobe in a capacious of rock crotty, but folds into cold, lonely isolation as Bob heads back to Chichester, Eborac, Eborac gets his headshivers off a punkin' fan, and the layman gets to play her jaded proto-punk rock beneath the grim Friday night lights of her richly homegrown studios. The film winds out of existence. It has fulfilled its unknowable life cycle and must now die.

In an exclusive 1988 interview with rock mag *Rolling Stone*, Dylan hinted at the wild cosmic happenstances that underpinned the making of *Hearts of Fire*. "It was like a lightning in your jacket pocket, man," he mumbled obliquely, "like being brought up Jewish on a bag farm." Later in the same interview, director Marquand – previously George Lucas' directorial avatar (aka *geek* mauler) on *Return of the Jedi* – mumbled dully about drastic rituals, perpetual motion and 'sensitive production schedules'.

In fact, the film they were releasing to could only have sprung into existence of its own volition. Imagine *Strand* Tey's home movies, or outtakes from weird Metallica doc: those *Kind of Loner* in which the thrash titan takes a break from dark metal alchemy, psychotherapy and despising each other in order to prance around Welsh cliffs in loose-fitting cote jockey-pants.

Now imagine fading rock scuzzrow Bob Dylan decked out in a patchwork leather buslequin Newcom Lighting Rupert Everett's chest-deep preening for the mental sad of the empty Fiona. All this while audience hopes slowly subside and empty mounds of narrative nothingness and confusion, muckily-treated choruses of rare-schlimme tenacity. This is not cinema, this is somebody else's sun-damaged mope of an after-beam waltz to the Third Rock Club. And a grim screaming it proves.

In *King Lear*, Shakespeare suggests that 'nothing will come of nothing', but he was wrong. Nothingness has forged forth the very hailing banners and all their flammable glories. C-beams glittering near the Teenhouse Gate; galaxies that existed impossibly long ago and lastingly far, far away.

Next to that, 90 minutes of *and crowded, overripe, solid-gone* inside industry barroom is a walk in the fucking park.



Argo

Directed by BEN AFFLECK

Starring BEN AFFLECK, BRYAN CRANSTON, JOHN GOODMAN

On Demand NOVEMBER 7

By now, everyone's over the fact that Ben Affleck—who once frisked on a yacht in a J Lo video—has set out his stall as a serious director. Apparently, good looks and filmmaking talent aren't mutually exclusive. *Good Will Hunting* was a solid, muscular detective thriller. *The Town* was rife with tension and betrayal. For his third film as director, the Massachusetts boy has finally strayed beyond Boston's city limits but, unfortunately, he's got a little lost.

You can't blame him for allowing a true story as pay-as-you-go to lure him out of his comfort zone. *The Canadian Capet* is a recently declassified, too-burry-to-be-believed story to rank alongside exploding cigars and poisoned umbrellas: tips in the annals of international espionage. In 1980, in the midst of the Iranian Hostage Crisis, CIA operative Tony Mendez and six embassy staff escaped Tehran on a flimsy 16 Swifferland by posing as the crew of a fictional Hollywood sci-fi film, complete with posters, costumes and an office on his old Columbia lot.

The real-life Mendez was a former head of the CIA's Disguise Section, whose CV included transforming an Asian diplomat and a black agent into two Canadian businessmen (at your heart's content, Wayne brothers). Affleck's Mendez is a much less interesting character, vaguely

defined by over-familiar traits—workaholic estranged from his family, gobs whiskey from the bottle in stressful moments. The supporting cast is superb (Bryan Cranston, Alan Arkin, John Goodman), but as they move their interesting faces in microtagways it's hard not to wish that one of them had been drafted in to work their magic on the understated lead.

Even sporting a beard, Ben Affleck isn't creepy enough, and neither is his storytelling style. This is an episode illustrating the dubious history of western intervention in the Middle East that's 10 to 100 years out of contemporary resonance, yet Affleck pretends to wittily spoon-feed the politics in order to remove it from the table. The opening sequence is a dummy's guide to twentieth-century Iran, complete with cartoon illustrations. You don't need to be a fan of Washington Post op-eds to feel patronized.

But never mind the serious stuff, worse is that Affleck fails to tease out the delicious, self-aggrandizing irony of a movie about how movies saved the world and, as a result, never has as much fun as it should. There are a thousand brilliant details in the 2007 *Word* article which could have made this the Great Satire's celebratory 'up yours to po-faced, booze-buzzing theocrats everywhere. It settles instead for a few industry in-jokes

"You're worried about the Ayatollah, try the WOLFF" (Ha ha, ROFL, etc.).

Affleck is a straight-forward, square-jawed maker of straight-forward, square-jawed thrillers, which is just what you want from a blue-collar Boston crime saga, but not so much with a story as rich with subtext as this. For now it seems a crudely mangled YouTube clip with bargain-basement production values will serve as America's most pointed intervention in the Middle East. On the plus side, Affleck does prove what many of us have long suspected: in certain circumstances, good looks can, in fact, be a barrier to filmmaking greatness. **ELIETTE JONES**

ANTICIPATION *We read this Wired feature, we enjoy it. This, too, is as hoped.*

4

ENJOYMENT *It's impossible to be lured by a movie this good except with teeth that rot.*

3

IN RETROSPECT *Turns out it's worse of the movie that night than here.*

3

Babette's Feast (1987)

Directed by GABRIEL ASSEL
 Starring STÉPHANE AUDRYN,
 BODIL UJER, BIRGITTE FIEDERSPIEL
 Released DECEMBER 14



Danish journeyman director Gabriel Axel served up this thin artisanal stew to the Academy in 1987 and, somewhat predictably, they threw it down without so much as a blink. On the menu: the candle-warming, kitchen-based adventures of buxom and mysterious Babette (Stéphane Audryn), an exile from revolution-blighted Paris. As a favor to an old friend, she is heartily employed as a house maid by two devoutly pious sisters as their tiny Lutheran community. By strange quirk, she wins 30,000 francs from an overseas lottery ticket, but instead of using the money to head back home, she decides to rustle up a gourmet meal to commemorate the death of the sisters' late father.

The film recovers the sunny Babette as she transforms her array of luxury ingredients into a scintillating celebration of earthly delights that the Puritan community she's promised to feed feel that by witnessing this banquet they

would be rejecting their vows of modesty and self-restraint—apparently they'd all rather chew down on a local sherry called *de la rose*.

Based on a yarn by Out of Africa writer Karen Blixen, Axel's film dwells in light, home-front horrors and lingering, Vaselina-lensed shots of dusky elders trying to refrain from expressing their near-organic delight. The satiatingly long-paced pic rolls nicely with the story, which is direct, uncluttered and sensible. And while not up there with the likes of *Taniguchi* or *Big Night*, the lengthy scenes of food preparation do make you yearn for an accompanying cookbook.

Delivering the simple message that life is short and should be enjoyed to its fullest, Axel's film is also very much of its time. It offers an uncomfortable celebration of its excess where cash lives all meaning if it's not actively being spent. It also gently mocks the moderation of

the townfolk, their deep-seated religion being the main source of their worldly ignorance. It's a charming tale that's told with admirable control, but, unlike *Babette*, Axel reluctantly sticks to tried and trusted flavors. **BETH DRAVER**

ANTICIPATION: *Films about life's age-of-iron moments like these days, so this might have gained new relevance.*

3

ENJOYMENT: *Light, frothy and sweet on the tongue, but lacking narrative.*

3

IN RETROSPECT: *It's a pro resurrection, not a dignus memps. Just a little spiritual.*

3

Starbuck

Directed by KEN SCOTT
 Starring PATRICK HUARD, JULIE LEBRETON, ANTOINE REITHYND
 Released NOVEMBER 23



In this wacky, Quebec-set comedy, Patrick Huard stars as David Wozniak, a shuffling forty-something who works (badly) for his father's meatpacking company as a delivery driver. He's 180-000 in hook to local gangsters, and there has on-off girlfriend/niece who's pregnant. Things get even worse when it emerges that in the '80s Wozniak—operating under the pseudonym "Starbuck"—was a sperm-bank regular fathering some 533 children. Now 142 of his sprogs have decided to take legal action to discover the identity of their biological dad.

With this odd, sprawling premise one would hope for an insightful look into themes of fatherhood and economic responsibility with plenty of laugh-dance-trailing along the way. Instead, director Ken Scott solidifies the whole affair with a wacky cartoonish tone and the

beefy internal logic that defied 2004 Will Smith catastrophe, *Jesse James*. You'll be scratching your head as Wozniak essentially stuffs his children one by one (except for the gay one) to intervene in their lives like a guardian angel.

The likable Huard is not without a naupied, deadbeat charm, but ultimately has little to do but react with bemusement to an artificial plot that's constantly being manipulated around him. Ironically, for a film that should be about a man learning to change the screenplay—chock full of sitcom-style twists and implausible developments—does all the work for him. Furthermore, while *Starbuck* is competently made, it's sorely lacking in visual inspiration. The drabness is accentuated by an ancient, guitar-led indie soundtrack.

Starbuck was Canada's biggest box office success in 2011 and has been scooped up by

DreamWorks for a remake with Vince Vaughn in the lead. One can see the potential for a slick Hollywood remake. If nothing else, Gus Van Sant's *Pi* (due) proved beyond a doubt that Vaughn won't have any trouble with the required working. **MIKE CLARK**

ANTICIPATION: *Not bad as a '50s children's*

3

ENJOYMENT: *Moderately entertaining, but cartoonish and manipulative.*

2

IN RETROSPECT: *It's heart is in the right place, but it's not a firing line.*

2

Ray Harryhausen: Special Effects Titan

Directed by GILLES PENSO

Starring RAY HARRYHAUSEN,
PETER JACKSON, JOHN LANDIS
In theatres NOVEMBER 9



It's hard to argue with director John Landis' bold assertion that Ray Harryhausen is "the only technician who is an actor." While few would be able to summon up the name of the director behind any, the original *Clash of the Titans* or *One Million Years B.C.* Harryhausen's stop-motion fingerprints are – quite literally – all over both films.

French filmmaker Gilles Pensó's no-fills documentary combines film clips, test footage and interviews with the great man, plus a raft of top table directors and SFX gurus, to turn the lights on the influential career of one of the only back room boys whose name and work will be familiar to those with only a superficial knowledge of cinema.

Wowed by Willis O'Brien's effects work for 1925's *King Kong*, Harryhausen worked his way from teen hobbyist to animator on TV's supernatural *Myster Gnome* puppet shows. He then managed to score a gig as O'Brien's assistant on 1949's pet gorilla parable, *Mighty Joe Young*. After that there was no stopping him. His memorable effects work added much-needed visual belt to the likes of *The Beast* from 20,000 *Fathoms* (which directly inspired *Godzilla*), loopy dinosaur mad-up *The Valley of the Gwangi*, and his magnum opus, *Jaws* and the *Apocalypse*.

Each film does little wrong, but technically it's something of a scrappy affair. From the frankly lame title right down to the wavering sound levels and the opportunistic nature of the interviews – Peter Jackson has clearly been hijacked at a press junket for *The Lovely Bones*, whereas Jody Lasheter dishes out his *Twister* bon-bons from in front of a huge poster for *Four and a Half 2* – it's clear that this is a sort of the giant labour of love rather than an especially slick, clearly controlled operation. **MAURICE JARVIS**

ANTICIPATION A perfect opportunity to celebrate this great animator's career with a relatively inexpensive documentary.

3

ENJOYMENT Perhaps little invention and a little long at 90 minutes, but it's clearly arranged richly detailed and informative.

3

IN RETROSPECT You cover every feeling Harryhausen perhaps deserves in more dramatic tribute, but it's a solid reward up of an extraordinary career.

3

Pitch Perfect

Directed by JASON WOODIE

Starring ANNA KENDRICK,
BRITTANY SNOW, REBEL WILSON
In theatres DECEMBER 21



Pitch Perfect has been blue skyed to an almost subatomic level in order to meet the entertainment demands of both the film and Broadway set. Concerning the purportedly cut-throat business of competitive collegiate a cappella road groups Jason Woodie's Austin-based musical comedy is set in a world where everyone has instant recall to the lyrics of Bruno Mars songs (i.e. a contemporary dystopia). But it contains two moments of note.

The first involves one character hilariously upturning the three connotations associated with the snow angel, a connotative device that has become a go-to for cheap wind-chime puns. The second is possibly the most magical 90 seconds of film you're likely to see in the cinema this year, a short cut-out nowhere aside that is as gloriously simple and emotionally moving as *Je t'aime*. Frequenting her way through *Le Tourbillon* in François Truffaut's *Jules et Jim*.

Following its standard comic montage of belated a gallery of musical numbers and along to Kelly Clarkson's "Senor U Been Good", the film's star, Anna Kendrick, successfully shuffles onto the stage (she poses the stationery from a photo.cup.pitchperfect.legged.montage.read.no single take – sang a little ditty while using the cup as a percussion instrument. Yes, we know, it hardly sounds like cascades of stardust, but it's a scene that's so surprising and suggestive that it easily overshadows everything else the film has to offer.

All of the otherousing, close-harmony work-outs that feature in *Pitch Perfect* sound like they've been pre-filtered through numerous audio processing programmes, though we're seeing actors singing the sound coming from their mouths is undeniably synthetic. The same rule applies to the script. Kendrick's character is otherwise a technically bawdy all-type required to roll her eyes at least

twice per minute, while the remainder of the females are split between Rebel Wilson's Fat Amy (no, that's the joke) and Hana Mae Lee's Lilly, a barely audible Japanese psycho-pose who gets to whisper all of the film's sharpest lines. **DAVID JENKINS**

ANTICIPATION Let's hope that you pitch perfect divide 1 speed the entire film!

3

ENJOYMENT Slipshod comedy, a strangeness that passes the time, but the a priori enthusiasm of Anna Kendrick is no one's north star.

3

IN RETROSPECT Of the gag-packed trailer spoiled the entire film.

2



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Martin McDonagh



It's been seven years since his mad-on, diabolical debut *In Bruges* charmed audiences across the globe. But playwright and filmmaker Martin McDonagh has gone a little off the reservation with his dour, meta comedy, *Seven Psychopaths*. He discussed this outrageous, semi-autobiographical jaunt through the decrepit underworld of Hollywood genre cinema with EW's

EW's. In 2008, there was a New York production of your play, *A Subnormal Heart*, starring Christopher Walken and Sam Rockwell. Is that why they were cast in *Seven Psychopaths*?

Martin McDonagh: None of the script had anything to do with that as it was written about seven or eight years ago. I was at rehearsals every day so I got to hang out with these guys. I just really liked them as actors. With *Seven Psychopaths*, it wasn't like working with strangers on day one. It felt like we had some kind of chemistry going on.

Did you already have the script ready when you were hanging out with them?

Totally. I wrote it just after I wrote the script for *In Bruges* but before I made *In Bruges*. Although I knew I didn't have the wherewithal to make it as my first feature. I knew I had to make something else first. I always wanted to come back to this.

In the period post-*In Bruges*, were you being offered more commercial projects to write and direct?

I only ever went to do my own scripts. I didn't want to work for anyone else or write for anyone else. My agent probably gets a lot of requests, but I don't hear about them because I'm too busy on my own stuff.

Was Colin Farrell's character, a heavy Irish writer, always called Marty?

Yeah, I think he was. But I went back and forth with it, especially when we got closer to filming. I felt like it would be cutting too many questions about autobiography and stuff like that. In the end I just thought, "Fuck it, why not?" There probably are elements of me within Colin's character, but there's also quite a few red herrings too. It was fun to play around with that but I wouldn't read too much into it.

As a writer, Colin Farrell's character finds inspiration in newspapers. Do you do that?

I prefer to make things up from scratch. I should read newspapers more, but I don't really. I'm much more interested in coming up with brand new stories.

The film's dialogue fits the style of these actors perfectly. Did you re-write the film specifically for this cast?

Not as much as you might think. There were maybe a couple of lines I added for Christopher Walken's character. They were mainly taken from things I heard him saying when we were rehearsing the play. The line where he says he thinks he'd make a great pope—that was just something Christopher said one day.

During the writing process, do you ever write specifically for people? Did you always have Colin in mind?

Strangely, it was Sam Rockwell who occasionally popped into my head during the writing process. He's a certain type of character.

who can go from outrageously funny to dark and deadly within the curve of a second. And that just helps to get inside the mind of that type of character.

Many are describing the film as being Tarantino-esque. Are you okay with that?

I'm more a fan of directors like Takeshi Kitano and Jim Jarmusch than Tarantino. I love *Reservoir Dogs* and *Pulp Fiction* was great, but I haven't been so crazy about his stuff since then. I haven't especially appreciated the Tarantino references in the reviews. It just seems like too easy shorthand. In certain ways I'm attempting to go beyond that guys-with-guns mentality. I don't think there was too much of a deliberate homage to any other filmmakers in *Seven Psychopaths*. Obviously there's a little clip of Kitano's Violent Cop, but you could almost say that *In Bruges* had more blatant references to other filmmakers, particularly Jarmusch. More in my head I was thinking about Sam Peckinpah and Terrence Malick. With the desert and the guns and low moral Peckinpah has there red, dark, poignant moments between the carnage and I was more looking to go down that road than anything.

Tosin Warsi plays a supporting role in the film. How did you come to cast him?

I initially spent my entire one day and there was an email from him and his wife asking if I would like to work with him, which was a dream. I've been a fan of his since I was a kid or whenever *Boyz n the D* comes on, and I knew he'd been to see a play of mine in New York before *In Bruges* was made. But maybe *In Bruges* reminded him about that. I got a message from him after he saw the play. And then this email. I still don't know how he got my address.

Life Just Is

Directed by **ALEX BARRETT**
 Starring **WILL DE MEO,**
JACK GIBBONS, EMMA HAN
 In town **DECEMBER 7**



W all that was an hour and a half of my life. I'm never getting back," says Pete (Jack Costigan) of the remastered DVD he's just watched with his friends. Pete objects to the "false hope" of "staged, latched-on happy endings" (Clare [Emma Han] seizes her *come deliver* anxiety "what people want"), maintaining that "just because it's not about a bunch of gloomy Scandinavian-swinging out to sea thinking about the meaning of life and the existence of God doesn't make it shit." David (Will de MEO) sits on the fence, while Tom (Nathaniel Martella-White) would have preferred some action. Returning to the apartment she shares with Jay (Jayne Wiseman), Clare walks past a row of Halloween Jack-o'-lanterns.

Slipping from romance to existential allegory, and from action to horror, the opening sequence of *Life Just Is* suggests a film in search

of its own generic identity: much as these five friends, stuck in a holding pattern somewhere between carefree university days and the adult world, are all on a quest for meaning in their post-graduate lives. Watching Pete's cruise of faith, mental breakdowns, Jay's repetition of past relationship troubles, and Clare and Tom's confused displacement of their mutual attraction, it's all too easy to agree with the pokily dismissive conclusion of Jay's older boyfriend Robby: "They're just at that stage of their life, that's all."

Writer/director Alex Barrett's feature debut settles his rite-of-passage ensemble drama in a Bergman mold, but its stilled, subdued dialogue hardly improves upon the subtle lines of the film-within-a-film critique in that opening scene. Barrett's message, embodied in his film's title and summarized by Pete's

epiphany that "searching for the answer is the answer", is no less of a cliché than the recreation of parted lovers at the end of any romance. Add the odd wooden performance and that is a little over 90 minutes of your life that you may wish to reclaim. **VICTOR LEE**

ANTICIPATION *Could this be the first work of a new British talent?* **3**

ENJOYMENT *Indistinct tones, stalled lives.* **2**

IN RETROSPECT *A cryptic, thoughtful work that will live on and far too earnestly.* **2**

Hit So Hard

Directed by **P DAVID EBERSOLE**
 Starring **PATTY SCHEMEL,**
COURTNEY LOVE, ERIC EDLANDSON
 In town **NOVEMBER 16**



W idely regarded as one of the most talented drummers of the '90s, Patty Schemel has been described as consistent, proficient and unopposed by her peers. In 1994, she left her nine-to-five gig at Microsoft to become a housewife for grunge band Hole, fronted by the first lady of rock, Courtney Love.

During her time in Hole, Schemel toured the world and conducted life as a gay artist. By the time she was 37 she was dabbling in drugs and at her lowest ebb was living on the streets as a crack-addicted prostitute. *Hit So Hard: The Life and Near Death Story of Patty Schemel* charts her tumultuous journey into and out of the spotlight.

P David Ebersole's documentary is a hedge-podge of behind-the-scenes clips from Hole's heyday alongside interviews with those who witnessed Schemel's toxic addiction first-hand and have lived to tell the tale. The documentary plays like a visual scrapbook from Courtney Love giving her shared two cents on Schemel's story to fleeting handheld shots of Kurt Cobain holding his baby; scenes are cut together harshly resulting in a narrative mess that feels a tad rough around the edges. Although the cut-and-paste femme aesthetic lends itself to capturing these choice moments of '90s rock history.

Spangled around this tale of textbook rock debauchery are pertinent documents regarding Schemel's role as a gay musician, and the influence that feminism and lesbian culture had on the grunge movement. Unfortunately, these discussions are over too quickly and, in this case, sex gets eclipsed by the more salacious topics of drugs and rock 'n' roll.

Hit So Hard brings together a grown-up group of Generation Xers who lost years - and in some cases lives - to the troubling escape of drugs. While missing the mark when it comes to telling a well-paced and balanced story, Ebersole's documentary certainly has the ability to shock, and uses its ill-starred heroine as a proxy case study to answer the question of what really happens to a burnt-out rock star after they've lost everything. **UNB TWERDLE**

ANTICIPATION *Lightning.* **2**

ENJOYMENT *Hard hitting.* **3**

IN RETROSPECT *Hit us so hard.* **3**

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Directed by COLIN TREVORROW
 Starring AUBREY PLAZA, JAKE JOHNSON, MARK DUPLASS
 Released DECEMBER 26



This film is not based on a real life story. It is, however, based on a real life ad, which ran in the classified pages of *Los Angeles Home Magazine* in 1997. It read: "Wanted. Somebody to go back in time with me. This is not a joke. You'll get paid after we get back. Must bring your own weapons. I have only done this once before. *Safety not guaranteed.*"

While everyone else spent a decade speculating about the ad's origin, writer Derek Connolly and director Colin Trevorrow have gone a step farther: inventing a backstory that joins the mystery together. In doing so, they've pulled off something almost as impossible as time travel—a 15.5 minute romance with a deadpan wit that is never gloom and a touching sweetness that is never cloying.

Aubrey Plaza is Darius, a dependent magazine intern with a face like Wednesday Addams and the sardonic manner of MTV's cult cartoon teenager Daria. Together with her jaded supervisor, Jeff (Jake Johnson), and geeky fellow intern Anna (Kiersey Clemons), Darius is sent to track down the man of the poster (heal).

And so they discover Kenneth (Mark Duplass), a reclusive shelf-stacker

who claims that his time machine is real and that government agents are following his every move. While Darius plays along for the sake of her future, Jeff uses the week's holiday as an excuse to look up an old girlfriend who he knew in the days before he became a shut-in and cynical hack.

Having set up these stereotypes, Connolly's script proceeds to do delightful, unexpected things with them, allowing his characters to break out of their conventional packaging and become real, complex people.

The narrative flirts with different genres, defying any assumptions you might make about what happens next. Familiar tropes are playfully subverted. A stealth break-in to a high-tech science lab is interrupted by a hilariously mundane office party, a climactic car chase takes place at 15 mph.

In the hands of a less-talented cast, this delicate and witty construction could have easily fallen to pieces. But the performances are impeccable, combining dry comic timing with a rich emotional vulnerability that makes the film a surprising joy.

Trevorrow is extremely suited for a debut, filmmaker *Though Safety Not Guaranteed* is rooted

in a suburban setting, he's created a futuristic world full of the not-undergrowth of childhood games and the bright, rusty meanings you stayed up all night to discover in an adult.

There's a wistful longing at the heart of the film, this is of the characters wants to go back to a time of innocence that they feel they've lost. "You can't just go and find that stuff again," one character argues. "So what if you can't go back?" the film replies. Why would you want to when you could be having this adventure right now? **JOSHUA CLAMBERT**

ANTICIPATION Looks charming and Duplass has impeccable taste credit stick

4

ENJOYMENT Takes even your criticism and gives you back a joyful sense of wonder

4

IN RETROSPECT For films we gloriously live up to this is potential

4



The House I Live In

Directed by EUGENE JARECKI
 Starring DAVID SIMON, NANNIE JETER, EUGENE JARECKI
 In town NOVEMBER 23

Apolly named African American mother-of-three Nannie Jeter was employed as a nanny by the Jarecki clan, even as, living with them in New York, that while her maternal love was being sapped by the Jarecki kids, her own offspring were being lured into a world of drugs and violence. Eugene Jarecki's startling investigative documentary takes these simple events as a springboard to perform a kind of ad hoc intellectual autopsy on the rotting cadaver of American society.

His central target is the severely top-sided US criminal justice system, which serves draconian punishments to those who have any connection whatsoever to illegal drugs. There are stories of people being fired from long-term jobs, turning to crystal meth production or crack dealing as a way to maintain economic stability. Though when they are caught, they are given life sentences in prisons with no hope of parole.

Why does drug possession carry such harsh penalties? According to Jarecki, it all boils down to party politics. In his bid to secure a second term, Richard Nixon declared a war on drugs, even though many commentators claim that he

didn't truly believe it was a war worth fighting. But the promise of expanding drugs from society turned out to be electoral gold. In turn, this reactionary measure was picked up by the Reagan Bush and Clinton administrations.

Jarecki's thesis is that the modern American justice system is perpetrating a self-engineered holocaust that is essentially exterminating an entire class and race of people. It's weighted favorably towards the rich, white and middle class (whose typical drug of choice is the less hysteria-inducing cocaine), leaving poor black and disenfranchised crack-users to suffer behind bars for their tragic vice. However, Jarecki by no means sets his film up as a rallying cry for the confederate; he also looks into the workings of local police forces and how they are structured to intentionally favor the quick (drugs) but rather than the protracted, meticulous murder investigation.

While Jarecki goes off on the occasional wild tangent, his film is both absorbing and surprising, even if, ironically speaking, it's not really pushing the envelope. David

Simon, the lauded Maryland-based writer and journalist behind *The Wire*, crops up as one of the talking heads this subject bring his forte. The film's most interesting and provocative discourse, however, comes from Richard Lawrence Miller, an African-American scholar (and look-a-like) who not only possesses detailed knowledge of early American drug laws, but has an incredibly sage and analytical take on how initiatives from the past are directly leading to problems of the future. **DODD JENKINS**

ANTICIPATION. Eugene Jarecki has form in the sprawling political doc arena.

3

ENJOYMENT. Quite all over it's place, but always absorbing.

4

IN REFLECTION. Jarecki offers just small overviews rather than any big one just you to take away.

3



The Shining (1980)

Directed by **STANLEY KUBRICK**

Starring **JACK NICHOLSON, SHELLEY DUVALL, DUNNY LLOYD**

Released **NOVEMBER 2**

Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* has been remade (as a TV series, disastrously, in 1997) parodied, and recently inspired a documentary, *Room 237*, which explains various theories about its hidden meanings. But now this chilling film about a writer Jack Torrance (played by Jack Nicholson), gradually going berserk as the caretaker of the insane Overlook Hotel is being released theatrically in a never-before-seen 144-minute version (aka the "US cut").

Though Kubrick regarded the 118-minute European version as superior, and indeed endorsed it as "official," this longer cut brings further intrigue to the table. Early scenes flesh out the family dynamic (Torrance's alcoholism is referred to explicitly), though also erode some character ambiguity. A moment in which Jack admits to his wife that he fell in love with the hotel immediately and seems he'd been there before feels like too much of a reveal. The most notable addition is a scene featuring a child psychologist who visits Jack's son Danny (Dunny Lloyd). "You don't have anything to worry about," she says incorrectly. Though the extra footage is largely inessential, it doesn't detract from the film's power to profoundly disturb on emotional, psychological and sensory levels.

The big screen is naturally the best place to appreciate the film's astonishing camerawork. Striding around the expanse of the Overlook, the camera assumes an omniscient, implicating power, a supernatural presence in itself. Even more chilling is the sound design, a deeply unsettling contrast of dead silence and piercing noise. The score is a tangle of dissonant, high-pitched stabs and eerie howls that includes works by modernist composers like Bartók, Kravtsov-Penderevski, and the musical myth dupe of Wendy Carlos. Thanks to the judicious sound editing, even the title cards are frightening.

Thematically, it's a film of almost infinite depths. Kubrick presents a despairing view of American married life, where the lack of love and intimacy is accentuated by the catastrophic surroundings. The only sex is extra-marital incestuous, which transgresses harshly (and unforgettable) into corporal disgust. It's also a brutal satire of the writing profession, enjoying a vainglorious, terminally undaunted boombound who takes out his masochism (and lack of honesty to goodness talent) on his defenseless family.

Finally *The Shining* is a film of remarkably contrasting performances. Most affecting is

Shelley Duvall as harrowed wife Wendy. Duvall suffered a nervous breakdown on set, and toward the conclusion it doesn't really seem like she's acting at all. Nicholson, by contrast—all bared teeth and lanky eyebrows—somehow manages to extract even when consumed. His intensely physical, barely restrained turn moves the film more explicitly into the realm of black comedy. The cherubic Dunny Lloyd is also stunning as the supernatural boy. His is surely one of the great performances by a child actor, a touching portrait of innocence under duress as the sanctuary of family disintegrates in front of his eyes. Much like *The Shining* is a whole, his tenure is timeless. **ADRIEN CLARK**

ANTICIPATION. *More of one of the greatest of horror films of all time?* **Yes please.**

4

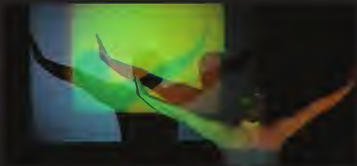
ENJOYMENT. *Amusing to think about and reflect on.*

5

IN RETROSPECT. *Essential viewing. Prone to be disturbed.*

5

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Jack Nicholson

FEATURE



The best thing about having *The Shooting* back on the big screen this November is the opportunity it provides to see "The Greatest Actor of His Generation" (declaring his most famous heavyweight punches, there's one he left a pair: Ringo said not to be bad coming through Jack Nicholson's list of credits, saving a case for his single greatest contribution to cinema: *Five Easy Pieces* and *Far From Over the Garden's Gate* may be strong if sincerely contenders, as would *Chinatown* or *The King of Marvin Green*). But what of Nicholson's slushy body of work behind the camera as a writer/director? Isn't it about time that entered the conversation?

The early years

Until recently, it's been nigh-on impossible to give Nicholson directorial projects the attention they deserve, given their severely limited availability on any home video format. That's now changed to a degree, but if you plan on starting right at the beginning, good luck tracking down a copy of Nicholson's 1963 writing debut *Thunder Island*. Never released on any format, there's at little information available on the film (bids from a putrefactory one sentence plot summary as IMDb) as there is on its producer/director Jack Lemmon, a forgotten journeyman in the annals of '60s mid-60s-morose, who nevertheless made more than 20 features.

Corman's world

Things pick up a little when we meet who Jack's boss at American International Pictures under the wing of Roger Corman, for whom he wrote three pictures and made contact with director Monte Hellman. Hellman was associate producer on Corman's 1960 film, *The Wild Ride*, in which Nicholson was starring, and the pair formed a working partnership that were revisited in *Kyleigh*, a hard-hitting western drama. Sadly, Corman lost both in the project so it never got made. However, he clearly saw something in the pair, sending them off to the Philippines in 1961 to write and shoot *Flight in Fury* and *Dark Door in Hell* in quick succession. Both were as short, sharp exercises in 5-movie cliffhangers, each with their own easily executed set pieces. But *It's Flight in Fury* that best shows at Nicholson's emergence as performer; Nicky Hellman being a capable producer of psychopathic stability.

Keep the whirlwind

While both are available on DVD in the UK as part of the Jack Nicholson: *The Early Years* collection, the transferees to desperate need of attention. They're not nearly as deserving, however, as a duo of Monte Hellman westerns: *Sile in the Whirlwind* and *The Shooting*, from 1965 and 1966 respectively. Nicholson produced both, taking over Fred Astaire's old office to write the former alongside Hellman. *Five Films in Nicholson's career can be listed in the term "forgotten masterpiece", it's then here. Subverting and re-writing western movie archetypes, *The Shooting* is as committed to its nihilistic, post-DeSodatie style as*

as *Whirlwind* is to its harsh realism. Both cry out for the kind of treatment usually reserved for the likes of the *Coffman* or *Monsters of Cinema* imprints.

Head movies

It's thanks to Criterion's outstanding 2006 release of the 3-disc collection, *America Lost and Found: The AFI Story*, that we have access for the first time to Nicholson's 1971 directorial debut, *Drive, He Said*, as well as his first collaboration (this time as a writer) with director Rob Marshall, on the pseudo-Beethoven mindfuck, *River* (1968). Nicholson demonstrated an interesting directorial vision when shooting *Drive, He Said*, one as stark as his two later efforts (*Drive*' death and *Chinatown* saved *The Two Jakes*). And yet it's a film that ultimately lacks cohesion between its disparate narrative strands. All this despite some stunning on-set logistical feats courtesy of director of photography Bill Butler.

Head proves the real deal and the established classic in the collection; a free-spirited tumble down the rabbit hole that sounds even as early screenplay written for Corman, *The Trip*. Plying like a kind of visual suicide note for constructed pop-entertainment, *The Monkeys*, the reintegration of footage like the Nguyen Van Lem execution ensures the film is fully removed from any expected similarities to Richard Lester's *Butter* collaborations. A dark, subliminally honest of movie-culture appreciation, it's a film that reaches through the door of commercial pop culture with all the force of Jack Fanning's arm.

Celeste & Jesse Forever

Directed by LEE TOLAND KRIEGER
Starring RASHIDA JONES,
ANDY SAMBERG, ELIJAH WOOD
Released DECEMBER 7

The icon-com is a resident old hand. Many films that straddle the indie-mainstream spectrum have taken on this hardest of genres, tinkered with the formula and rejected it with equal contempt. But from *The Five-Year Engagement* to *Friends with Benefits*, they've yielded mixed results.

In *Celeste & Jesse Forever*, the twist arrives early. After a montage of loved-up photos we accompany Celeste (Rashida Jones, also co-writer) and Jesse (Andy Samberg) on their morning commute. Their conversation is full of in-jokes, banter and standard-issue boozing, as well as one bizarre bit of business in which the duo dramatically jerk off a phallic tube of lip-gloss towards its glossy climax.

But there's something hidden behind this chemistry – a revelation that hits so hard it might as well be accompanied by a second stop-and-look. Over dinner that evening, one of their friends reveals that the couple broke up months ago and are, in fact, going through a divorce.



After this table-top bit of development, *Celeste & Jesse Forever* takes on all of the more dramatic turns, shifting focus away from the loopy couple and concentrating on Celeste, who goes through a cycle of determined singlehood, bad dates and inevitable heartache.

Jones may have impressed with her *diva* to earth quality in TV sitcoms like *The Office* and *Parks and Recreation* but she's slightly stretching herself here as her character constantly veers between mawkish and melancholy. Her Celeste is a bundle of contradictions, by turns pragmatic, pedantic, bossy and lusty.

Such contradictions make for excellent drama, but for all its ambition, the film can't escape stagnant rom-com distractions. The protagonists have the familiar friendship group of gay BFFs (Elijah Wood) and hyper-masculine dudebros (co-writer Will McCormack), and the script is jump-cutted with lukewarm gags about their vegan restaurant and their stalker.

Celeste & Jesse Forever attempts to move new ground – namely that hard-to-describe situation in which a relationship outlives a romance – but while it tries its hardest to break up with the genre, it still seems for emotional support. **MICHELLE KUBIE**

ANTICIPATION *In mobstans, a screenplay defined from a flourish, here trying to find something real in the rom-com formula*

3

ENJOYMENT *Rashida Jones and Andy Samberg make a good enough show about the strains of poly*

2

IN-BETWEEN *Charming and not without its moments, but far too inconsistent to capture the simplicity it strives for*

2

The Hunt

Directed by THOMAS VINTERBERG
Starring MADS MIKKELSEN, THOMAS RO LARSEN, ANIKA WEDDERKOPF
Released NOVEMBER 30

Coming across like a twelfth TV movie deconstruction of Alfred Hitchcock's 1956 drama, *The Wrath of Man*, Thomas Vinterberg's *The Hunt* won the grand, literally minded denizens of a leafy Danish suburb transform into revelling night monkeys at the mere whiff of social dissonance. It's a case of guilty and proven innocent for kindly primary school teacher Lucas (Mads Mikkelsen), who is wrongfully accused by one of his pet-starred pups of some unsavory extra-curricular activity.

With spurious charges trump basic rationality as Lucas is wrongly ostracized from the community while awaiting regional charges to confirm to all that he is indeed a repugnant sex pervert. Operating under the supposed illusion that adults will always take the words uttered by their children at face value, Lucas' crime? Days has to the level of brooding, Kafkaesque poly-



wherens, for reasons unknown, he refuses to argue his case or offer an alibi.

Misapprehension in the extreme, Vinterberg's film interrogates as ripe social critique when in fact it has all the psychological credibility of a cheap soap opera. Its central ditch is that Lucas' innocence is never in doubt, and so the process of unravelling the film is simply a case of watching hell be solved.

That the plot machinations of *The Hunt* don't have close scrutiny is only part of the problem. Vinterberg has obviously worked closely with his cast to elicit naturalistic, free-flowing performances, and you'd be hard-pressed to fault Mikkelsen's stoical central turn. But still, Vinterberg has only succeeded in creating crude ciphers, not complex human characters. The film's hysterical children are evil, credit is more pronounced and withering

than even *The Green Room*, and the manner in which it tackles these issues is at best irresponsible, at worst plain dangerous. It amounts to the very same alarmist tabloid balderdash that it supposedly denies. **DAVID JENKINS**

ANTICIPATION *The long in the toothiness Vinterberg gained a critical Oscar's competition shot with *Incendies* draws*

3

ENJOYMENT *Mikkelsen's performance made three fourths a film here*

2

IN-BETWEEN *Self-satisfied and depthless* (11/11)

1



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Silver Linings Playbook

Directed by **DAVID O. RUSSSELL**

Starring **BRADLEY COOPER, JENNIFER LAWRENCE, ROBERT DE NIRO**

Releasing **NOVEMBER 21**

At a certain point in time, American director David O. Russell was one of the more unpredictable and acerbic comedic talents working on the fringe of mainstream Hollywood. Movies like *Boys with Girls* and *Three Kings* displayed an intelligence and sardony that made their success profitable, but unlike his previous film, *The Fighter*, saw O. Russell playing it very straight and though the film worked on its own terms, it seemed he might have left his wild years behind him.

Thankfully, *Silver Linings Playbook* proves that O. Russell hasn't lost the knack of top-loading a little subversion into a star-packed studio picture. Sure, it wraps up a little more easily than the director's hardcore fans might have liked but, for just over an hour, this is one of the strangest American comedies to emerge in quite some time.

Bradley Cooper stars as Pat, an unflinching optimist recently released from an eight-month stint at a mental institution, the result of a violent streak sparked by catching his wife (Jennifer Lawrence) cheating on him. More not exactly in the headscarf frame of mind when released, and is determined to get his spouse back despite the restraining order. He also likes to jog

while wearing a black garbage bag to moderate perspiration. Slightly not well.

But, not is anyone else in the film, from his obscure-compulsive suburban bookie father (Robert De Niro, more entertaining than his become-pearl-to-mystic-magical-girl-down-the-block Tiffany (Jennifer Lawrence)). She too has suffered a breakdown, which makes her perfect for Pat in the eyes of their mutual friends. Though there are laughs to be had, this is a film that presents everyone's private insanity as a way to celebrate what makes us unique. O. Russell embraces human flaws wholeheartedly.

Silver Linings is at its best when its narrative is as unpredictable as its characters, with O. Russell juxtaposing a series of mental games and manipulations that together operate as a charming screwball comedy for the uncharacteristically ridiculed. It all leads towards a conventional happy ending that is something of a let-up, but at least O. Russell veers down a truly compelling byway to make the journey feel worthwhile. Cooper regularly delivers his finest performance to date, dropping all of his more star-messiah to play a severely damaged man with humanity and humor. And Lawrence matches him all the way, proving the cliche can do more than merely underplay her lead-making.

De Niro and Chris Tucker (as one of Pat's institutionalised buddies) are toothy comic-stealing side players, but this is very much the Cooper-Lawrence show. More than anything else, though, it's just nice to see O. Russell reveal his darkly comic comfort zone. That an echo of his unique voice can still be heard through the fog of this more populist comedy drama is good news indeed, and we hope it allows him to crank out those hammed gems for years to come. **PHILIPPOVA**

ANTICIPATION. Will this confirm David O. Russell's (rough) transformation into a popular Hollywood joiner? **3**

ENJOYMENT. Plus. This is a funny and excellent movie. And it appears to be Robert De Niro. **4**

IN RETROSPECT. The ending is a bust, but there's a wealth of good stuff here. **3**



Whatever Happened to Baby Jane? (1962)

Directed by **ROBERT ALDRICH**
 Starring **BETTE DAVIS, JOAN CRAWFORD, VICTOR BONO**
Releases **DECEMBER 14**

Like an even more pathetic riff on Gloria Swanson's Norma Desmond in her repulsive yearning for past stardom and even revealing the necromancy of Regina Giddens — her character in William Wyler's *The Little Foxes* — with the removal of propriety stripped away, Bette Davis' Jane Hudson is a fully fledged screen monster.

Robert Aldrich's 1962 horror picture begins in 1917 with "Baby" Jane waving the crowds in a speeded childhood celebrity while her sister Blanche looks on. We quickly cut to 1925 and note the sisters' reversal of fortune, with Blanche becoming a major movie star and Jane now an unbankable drunk. We then move with a cruel dash to "yesterday," as a witty title card informs.

In the present, the now elderly sisters live in a decaying mansion in which a loose-tongued and increasingly cruel Jane looks after Blanche (Joan Crawford), now confined to a wheelchair after a career-ending automobile accident years earlier, an incident believed to have been perpetrated by a jealous Jane.

"Cruelly" is the operative word here, and not just in Jane's belated monomaniacal Blanche. There's a certain brutality in presenting Davis in grotesque make-up that accentuates her age (54 at the time of the film's release but looking at least a decade older). Joan Crawford gets off somewhat lighter-

in an early scene. Aldrich has Blanche watch her old movies on TV, and her youthful visage on the small screen contrasts notably with the wrinkle-emphasizing close-ups of the aged actress.

And yet in joining this pair of screen legends together, Aldrich has crafted a treat it gloriously over the top horror exercise that also doubles as a Hollywood tale so bleak it makes *Reverend Henderson's* look all sweetness and light. Over 104 minutes Jane wages a war of espionage and psychosis, terror against her sister, intercepting her mail, cutting off all contact with outsiders and putting dead birds and rats in her meals.

These last moments are played as high camp or low horror, depending on how you look at them, but there are plenty of heavily accented intrusions of the grotesque that are both harrowing and deliciously irresistible. There are *also* enough instances of situational suspense (will Blanche amble downstairs in time to place a phone call before Jane returns home?) to draw the appropriate comparisons to Hitchcock.

Bette Davis' best roles of her '30s and '40s heyday (*Now, Voyager*, *Dark Victory*) were sympathetic portraits of women ill at ease in a male dominated society. In her weaker roles, a suspicious number of which were directed by Wyler, she's either blamed for her "aberrant"

behavior (*Jelbab*) or presented as a convincing kitch (*The Little Foxes*).

That *Baby Jane* builds out of the latter mode while exaggerating it ludicrously means that Aldrich offers a highly entertaining riff on one aspect of the Davis persona. It also means that, despite a third-act revelation that presents Jane in a slightly altered light, we're forced to accept a near caricature of what was already the least fabulous strain of Davis' cinematic identity in order to welcome the legendary actress back to the screen. **ASHLEY SCHENKER**

ANTICIPATION. *How will* **Hitchcock's 1962** *horror play* **in contemporary audiences?**

4

ENJOYMENT. *There are plenty of* **thrills and as shiverings of suspense** **in this weekly canon horror film**

4

IN RETROSPECT. *There's* **no question we've witnessed** **something significant** **but the characterisation of the** **Bette Davis role leaves** **something of a bad aftertaste**

3



Alps

Directed by YORGOS LANTHIMOS

Starring STAVROS PSYLLAKIS, ARIS SERVETAKIS, JOHNNY YEBKES

Released NOVEMBER 9

When the four lead characters in Yorgos Lanthimos' new film meet to discuss the issue of their group, their leader chooses the word *Alps* for a couple of reasons, one of them being that "the name in no way reveals what it is that we do".

That line is indicative of the Greek director's approach to storytelling. *Alps* is a film about people who offer the viewers no subtitles for the merely deceased. Filling a gap in the lives of grieving families until their pain subsides. But Lanthimos is deliberately vague on the details of this arrangement and of the motivations and agendas that these his characters to take on these roles.

The director's previous films, *Dogtooth*, was similarly replete with contextual information, but that looks like a model of expositional clarity next to this one, which keeps us guessing about the true nature of what we see depicted on screen.

The central relationships in *Alps* are all about control: with Lanthimos again using a small ensemble to explore group dynamics and extreme modes of behaviour. Most Elane (Aris Servetakis) is the *Alps* self-appointed leader. He takes a sadistic delight in the power he possesses and is quick to react to any dissent or cross from his female colleagues in a brutal manner.

However, as in *Dogtooth*, we gradually see cracks begin to appear, with nurse Most Rouge (Angelika Papoulia) attempting to break free – defying the rules in her search to find a genuine connection. Her story becomes the film's emotional through-line, although it is complicated by her own literary sense of the boundaries between real and fake encounters.

Even if the lack of context Lanthimos provides can make *Alps* a disorienting and maddening experience at first, it inexorably grows into a deeply absorbing one. The use of muted colours, off-kilter framing and disjunct, absurdist humour is just as effective here as it was in *Dogtooth*, creating a distinctive milieu in which this bizarre behaviour makes a weird kind of sense.

The monotone delivery that Lanthimos elicits from his cast is also brilliantly suited to the *Alps* tones: the scripts they have been given by the betrayed families. These sequences are often hilarious – notably a pitiless reading of "Don't stop. It feels like heaven" during a sex scene – but they can quickly rise into unsettling territory. One blind elderly lady asks for her two stand-ins to recreate an affair that her late husband had with her best friend. (Considering these relationships from

the pointed view of the families who hire the *Alps* adds a fresh layer of moral and emotional complexity to the picture.)

It's hard to imagine *Alps* having the same crossover appeal as *Dogtooth* as it feels less obvious and inevitably less revelatory than that debut. But in many respects this is a more ambitious and challenging piece of work, and the impact of its quietly devastating finale certainly leaves a mark that lingers long after the film cuts to black. Multiple viewings are encouraged, and they may reveal just how impressive an achievement this is from one of the best new voices in contemporary cinema. **PHILIPPOCANNON**

ANTICIPATION: What has the director of *Dogtooth* got up his sleeve this time? **4**

ENJOYMENT: A tough, implacable and mordantly funny film to watch **3**

IN RETROSPECT: Regrets multiple in steps to pick this one apart **4**

Yorgos Lanthimos

How do you follow a film like *Dogtooth*? Yorgos Lanthimos' surreal 2009 breakthrough was a startling revelation. His new film, *Alps*, is even more challenging and ambitious. The director let *IMELDA* in on the secrets of creating distinctive, memorable films on a shoestring.

Don't let financial limitations stand in your way

I did make *Alps* with less money [than *Dogtooth*] but it wasn't by choice. It was the amount of money that we could get at the time and it turned out to be less, so we decided to just go ahead with it. It forces you to do many things and to script many things. If there's a film you want to make and certain things you have to admit that you want to do, you have to ask if you want to make the film under these conditions. It might mean that the film can't look the way you want it to look because you have no lights, you can't choose the locations by aesthetic, you have to find the locations from friends and they have to be free; you can't paint walls or change the furniture, because you don't have the money.

Always write with a partner

First of all, I am not good at writing. I am quite lazy. I always think it's very useful to have a different mind next to you if you want to create something more complex. In *Dogtooth* I already had the idea and I went to Efthymis [Efthymiou] — it was his first script, actually — and from my ideas he started writing a few scenes to see if we could write together, and when we liked the scenes we went further. In the middle of writing *Dogtooth* we started discussing *Alps* and went back and forth, and he had this idea about death and people asking other people to write letters or make phone calls pretending to be a loved one who has died. When he told me that I was very interested, and I sat down to write this synopsis about a nurse who works in a hospital



and actually offers herself as a substitute for these people. I showed it to him and he said, "It's interesting, but what if it's a group?"

Don't pander to the audience

I wish I knew what made *Dogtooth* such a success because I would do the same thing again. Actually, I wouldn't because I'm quite reactionary and I might think, "Why is this so popular? Let's make it darker, let's go further..." There is something of that in *Alps*. There are so many different audiences, so many different countries and cultures, and people perceive things differently according to their own personality, so you have to go by your own instincts and do what you feel is right. It's not like we want to withhold information to irritate the audience, it's just that I find it much more intriguing when something is revealed to me gradually and I'm asked to be involved and engaged and to think about these things.

Don't rely on support from home

Greek films have never been very successful in Greece, unless it's a commercial film with a big TV star. It's kind of weird because we do

have a theatre scene that's quite rich. So there is that culture, and almost every serious film that you find in Cannes, Venice or Berlin will be released on a couple of screens in Greece. But there is always this kind of conflict between the audience and the own cinema. My debut, *Elizeth*, was barely released in Greece. It only ran for a few weeks in a cinema that is actually a bar. *Dogtooth* was kind of a historic moment in Greek cinema. After it won in Cannes, people who wouldn't actually go and see such a film went to see it, and many of them were quite irritated. *Alps* did okay but it was released at a time of huge turbulence with the Prime Minister resigning. Turns out that wasn't such a good time to release a film.

Keep your options open

I don't like to have a preconceived notion about how a character should look or how they should move, because I want to be surprised by the way someone acts in that role. I don't limit myself by saying, "The character of the nurse is a 50-year-old fat woman from a middle-class family. I just want to find someone that intrigues me. Even people that I know pretty well, like Angeliki [Tzavelis] who was in *Dogtooth*, I have them go through a screen test because I need to see what happens in this part. The nurse goes for Ariane [Labed] who I knew from *Attention*. I know she's a great actress, but I needed to see her in this to be sure that whatever it is she has will add something to the part.

Don't over-rehearse

In *Dogtooth* there was a combination of actors and non-actors, and while we did have a lot of rehearsal, it mainly consisted of playing games. It's not so much about rehearsing the scenes, it's about making them feel more comfortable in their bodies. I wanted them to forget about how they were behaving and start being a little bit silly and bored. Usually, I wanted them to start acting like children.



Aurora

Directed by **CRISTI PUIU**

Starring **CRISTI PUIU, CLARA YODL, CATHNEL DE MITRESCU**

Released **NOVEMBER 9**

Sure matters. It's been just over two years since Cristi Puiu's frenetically intense and tantalizingly sparse 160-minute psycho drama, *Aurora*, premiered on a Cannes sidebar in 2009. Though the film polished critics' risibullous runtime no-doubt contributed to its prolonged shelving. Apparently your name has to be James Cameron or David Fincher to produce three-hour films that will also be given a chance to find an audience in cinema. That Puiu "was" as the loaded Romanian maestro behind 2005's *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu* didn't count for much suggests a sad state of distribution affairs.

In tone and execution, Puiu's formally exacting horrorshow feels like a long lost relation of Chantal Akerman's 1975 masterpiece *Jour de femme*, El Quijote Camerone, 1989 *Brazil*, in that it captures the daily movements of a single protagonist with an ethereal, closed-circuit precision. To watch the film requires an immediate attention to psychological detail: there is no exposition, we do characters explain their actions as randomly as their presences in fiction; the camera of the camera. If you're not willing to give yourself over to this movie, then there really is no point in watching it.

Puiu himself plays Yorel, a schizoidly middle-aged father of two who is in the midst of a very important piece of business and is worried that someone might be following him. He's able to act normally around his family and work colleagues, but when he's on his own (which he is for much of the film), his mind appears to be taken over by some magnetic concern. Puiu's technically astonishing performance is a mix of minutely calibrated lies and glances, while information regarding events that have occurred prior to the film's timeline can be inferred from how Yorel engages with his surroundings. The question of where his paranoia derives its address (in the second half of the film) and when it arrives, it's a shocking revelation.

Perhaps the defining statement among a recent crop of films that take the banality of evil as their subject — Markus Schöner's *Michael*, Justin Kurzel's *Shoeshorn* — *Aurora* manages to convey an air of extreme violence without ever actually depicting any on screen. As with *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu* and his brilliant, little-known debut *Stăg and Dongă*, Puiu confirms here that he uses cinema as tool to monitor human process, and that material which may actually come across as extraneous or

spurious can in fact be loaded with vital truths, if not insight.

When the film was released in the US, a few critics dismissed *Aurora* as "too boring." It does require a massive emotional investment, and it is very long, but this chilly and majestic work takes a giant risk in choosing to be about boredom. It examines the wealth of physical and psychological detail that contributes towards a single act. In the end, it asks if a system of law could ever be sophisticated enough to acknowledge the dark complexities of the human mind. **DWYER-KENNY**

ANTICIPATION: *Aptly opens right down the middle when it premiered five years ago*

3

ENJOYMENT: *A technical and emotional tour de force. A worthy great addition to the so-called Romanian New Wave*

4

IN RESPECT: *Best in crop distorts to a moment for this one. Yes it is the cinema if you can*

4

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Rust and Bone

Directed by **JACQUES AUDARD**
 Starring **MARION COTILLARD, MATTHIAS SCHÖNHEIMER**
 Released **NOVEMBER 2**

A French director Jacques Audard, awarded a 2006 UNESCO World Heritage Prize, every time he gets behind the camera, he reinvents the final scene from John Huston's late-career hit *Red City* (1972). Specifically the iconic denouement in which two beaten-down boxers played by Burt Reynolds and a young Jeff Bridges sit and drink a cup of coffee in a murky diner in Stockton, California. They realize—with a quiet acceptance—that they are failures and that their lives will always “make a bed for the dead.”

With *Rust and Bone*, Audard again draws on the essence of this scene, this time bringing to a strong female lead who must negotiate her relationship with the outside world after losing both her legs. Stephanie (Marion Cotillard), an over trainer, is injured during an accident at the aquatic theme park where she works. During her prolonged period of consciousness she falls in love with a homeless, lone-knuckle fighter named Ali (Matthias Schoenaerts). He has just arrived in town, taken free from a clearly fragmented and troubled life elsewhere. The belated Schoenaerts presents Ali as a volatile yet ultimately loving outsider. The moments of tenderness he shares with his new, frequently top-over into uncomfortable misadventure while intimate scenes with Stephanie are tentatively clouded by his apparent emotional indifference. He is a classic Audard male.

From the synopsis alone, the outlook isn't promising: the whole smacks of overrated metaphor while the juxtaposition between the raw brutality of the boxer and the ruled brutality of the male fighters is a note on-the-line. And yet Audard has in fact created a film that skillfully and tenderly balances these forces. Stephanie experiences surges of anxiety propelled by the unbearable nature of both the animal and the man she loves. This lattermost sense of failure looms heavy over almost every scene, and sudden eruptions of emotion threaten every exchange.

The horror of Stephanie's accident is undercut with great style, set to the agonizing deep-punching bass of Paul D. Butler's *I Like U More If U Like the Film* as a whole, the scene is fragmentary and busy. But Audard is brutal when it comes to depicting the shortcomings of the human body he acrobats in on the street and blood of the street fighters, who batter each other in out-of-town parking lots. The sex scenes too are deeply crude, precisely because of their matter-of-fact portrayal. The bodies and minds are damaged, but are in the process of being reduced and rebuilt.

Audard plays on well-worn themes—the threat of violence, the abuse of power, men struggling to accept responsibility for their actions—but he also trades original ground in his exploration of Stephanie's burgeoning sense of womanhood as altered by her accident. When Ali persuades Stephanie to go swimming in the sea, the first time she has stepped outside of her cranking flat as months (it's a moment of incredible sexual energy that has nothing to do with Ali's male presence).

Instead, Audard's camera denies itself to Stephanie's newfound sensuality. She swims naked, legless as hell, severely reducing each nerve in her body, reducing that life might not be worthless. Cotillard's performance is electrifying. Resident of John Huston, Audard locates a kind of poetry in damage. He finds a brutal beauty in failure. **B+ (AUGUST 10, 2009)**

ANTICIPATION *It's Audard and this is for a movie as an artist's life story, sounding like an artist.* **4**

ENJOYMENT *These moving pictures hold a truth, gripping film.* **4**

IN REPROSPECT *Apart from the happy accidents, it's a life of suffering and pain at the end.* **4**



Great Expectations

Directed by MIKE NEWELL

Starring HELEN CROMPTON, RALPH FIENNES, JASON FLEMING
It opens NOVEMBER 30

One of Charles Dickens' best-loved novels, *Great Expectations* has already been adapted for the screen on numerous occasions. So where is it going? Stay close to the source with a straightforward take on the vein of David Lean's revised 1946 classic, or try for a modern spin as Alfonso Cuarón did in 1998 by resetting the tale in contemporary New York?

Director Mike Newell trades an effective line between faithful and fresh, staying loyal to the Victorian novel while playfully making its dark, Gothic elements in a long-term check, almost over-the-top fashion that brings Tim Burton to mind.

The opening scene throws us straight into a snappy, visceral style that never allows the sprawling tale to drag. Young orphan Pip (played as a child by Toby Bevin) joins over many Kent members to visit his parents' graves. He's then enthralled and scared witless by a desperate convict. Mad, covered and chained, Ralph Fiennes plays up the ghoul-like aspect of criminal Magwitch when Pip promises to help.

Newell gloriously wraps up the Gothic gloom when Pip—who lives with his cantankerous sister and her indulgent blacksmith husband, is enlisted by younger Miss Havisham to play with her adopted daughter Estella (Helen Crompton).

Trepidation strikes as soon as Pip enters dilapidated Satis House, where the residents wallow behind drawn curtains in the dim light of candlelamps.

Helen Crompton, a former couple bride of Tim Burton, is an all-too-obvious choice as Miss Havisham; she taps into the Victorian-style eccentricity of the frozen-on-time bride, still dressed in her now yellowed gown. Her wedding cake toasting with rain on the dust-covered banquet table. And this decay, Pip falls for the pretty and proud Estella, raised by her wretched mother with a cold heart. Meanwhile, his ambitions to advance up the social ladder are launched.

Leaping years forward the grown Pip (Glenroy Lewis)—bringing a brooding intensity to the character—jumps at the opportunity when offered a large sum of money by an anonymous benefactor to move to London and become a gentleman, raising himself to a position where he's eligible to marry Estella (Holliday Grainger). Oily Alexander is also well-suited as Herbert Pocket. Pip's effusively cheery London roommate and firm ally. As Pip is plunged headfirst into the demands of his new station, he frequently butts heads with Bentley Drummie (Ben Lloyd-Hughes), a wealthy youth and heir who has no redeeming

personality traits—and who soon becomes a rival for Estella's attention.

Bold costume design fires some baroque, updated quirk into the familiar tale, the wildly early quills and long velvet coats of the transverse performers are more punk rock than staid decorum. Dickensian social satire firmly intact. Pip slowly learns hard truths through the plot's twists and surprising revelations about the shallow egotism of a wealthy and distant Dickens reverie has continuously not ending—and we're left gasping until the last which remains Newell's wildest for **CHALLENGED**.

ANTICIPATION. *Great Expectations* are less than great for a fresh take on this oft-adapted Dickens classic.

2

ENJOYMENT. No mistakes in this quick, dark reimagining which sits along at a pace while credibly embracing Gothic dramas.

3

IN RETROSPECT. It's all over. Tim Burton, but as extra. *Victorianism* is a fitting spin on a familiar tale.

3



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The Pool

Directed by **CHRIS SMITH**
 Starring **VENKATESH CHAWAN**,
AYESHA MOHAN, **GANGA CHAWAN**
 Released **NOVEMBER 16**



Originally completed in 2007 and released in the US in 2008, *The Pool* from director Chris Smith finally plunges into UK cinemas four years later. Why it's been plucked from the shelf after all this time remains a mystery, though its cinematic release history doesn't take away from the fact that it's an utterly charming little film.

You may know co-writer and character Smith for his 1999 documentary, *Uncertain Mover*, about a pair of lovable drop-outs attempting to piece together a rock horror movie. *The Pool* couldn't be more of a departure: a Hindi-language Bollywood-like comedy-drama about Venkatesh (Venkatesh Chawan) an itinerant, somewhat hotel worker who dreams of diving headlong into a swimming pool owned by a rich local family.

A model of local importation and sincere character building, Smith's film examines the

harder existence of life with no financial or family support. He also looks at the psychological strain of developing meaningful aspirations without the correct tools to achieve them. Spied on the benches of a tree gazing at the pool, Venkatesh is invited by the owner of the property to help out in the garden, though it's not long before Venkatesh is making eyes at the host's daughter, Ayesha (Ayesha Mohan).

The naturalistic dialogue sparkles as the script favours amusing discursive conversations and never stops to have its characters prattle to one another. Venkatesh's tragic backstory and his reasons for wanting to dive into the pool are revealed subtly while the view of Goa (the film's location) through the eyes of an American director is both tasteful and evocative. Drawing out an exotic, heady while refusing to shy away from the dismal economic conditions

Things go a little astray during the final hold-over, and it's not helped by Smith's baffling decision to fade numerous randomly selected scenes to black. Yet even though *The Pool* is nothing towards its 10th birthday, better late than never we say. **DWIGHTS**

ANTICIPATION: Chris Smith's fifth feature is viewed from 2007
Chab

2

ENJOYMENT: Man, a bona fide character has been salvaged

3

IN RETROSPECT: *Up to 10th* Smith will make many movies in this final back-past style

3

Excision

Directed by **RICHARD HAYES JR**
 Starring **ANNALYNE MCCORD**,
TRIC LOEDS, **ARIEL WINTER**
 Released **NOVEMBER 2**



"I know I can be a bit of a demented bitch sometimes but you still love me, right?" So 18-year-old Pauline (Annalynne McCord) asks her mother Phyllis (Traci Lords), her words echoing through *Excision* like a desperate cry for help. Inevitable, unrepentant delusional and increasingly dangerous teenage suburban Pauline is certainly hard to love, but at the same time her intense need to gain her mother's attention and affection is also ultimately what allows viewers to maintain sympathy with her through an escalating series of horrors. That and McCord's exceptionally nuanced performance going from arrogant to vulnerable to ecstatic, to downright delirious, often in the space of a few seconds.

"I don't know if a teenager who doesn't profile is a misogynist," Pauline says casually, accusing her more aberrant behaviour. Yet while the adults around her regard this gawky, greasy-haired high schooler as being like the teen model

from *Welcome to the Dollhouse*, she is revealed both by her disturbing dreams of sexuality and surgery (to which we alone are privy) and by her further extra-curricular activities, to be far closer to the unhinged anti-heroine of Lucky McKee's 2002 film *Meg*.

Phyllis is something of a "demented bitch" herself, a neurotic suburban housewife obsessed with church and children, overtly denigrating her youngest, eldest daughter Grace (Ariel Winter) over Pauline. The potentially destructive nature of the mother-daughter bond certainly forms a key theme in Richard Hayes Jr's feature debut, expanded from his award-winning 2008 short of the same name.

Yet Phyllis is played by one-time teen porn star Traci Lords, and the film's other adult authorities—Pauline's priest, maths teacher and headmaster—are played respectively by "pope of trash" John Waters, *A Clockwork Orange* badboy Malcolm McDowell and *Lynchian* del-

irious bell ring Mike Jeters, elite casting shots that even the most wary-eyed teen could eventually grow up and become integrated into the society against which he/she once rebelled. It's a ray of hope in a film whose trajectory is otherwise distinctly bleak. **ANTHONY**

ANTICIPATION: Good feature but...

3

ENJOYMENT: A strikingly shot brilliantly acted adolescent tale of passage from darkly funny to just plain dark

4

IN RETROSPECT: This disturbing demented girlhoods cuts to the heart of teen growing pains

4

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Lawrence of Arabia

Directed by DAVID LEAN
 Starring PETER O'TOOLE, ALEC GUINNESS, OMAR SHARIF
 Released NOVEMBER 22

In 1993, following the re-release of the newly restored 1962 cut of *Lawrence of Arabia*, the American Film Institute honoured David Lean with its Lifetime Achievement Award. The award itself was presented by Steven Spielberg, who, in his presentation speech, spoke generously of the formative influence of Lean's life-period epic on his own filmmaking career, citing Robert Bolt's screenplay as 'the best ever written'.

Whether we share Spielberg's sentiments or simply choose to forgive a hyperbolic attempt at rehabilitating a major filmmaking talent — one who has become more susceptible than most to the undulations of critical favour — it's interesting to note that the single line of dialogue upon which that monumental pillar of cinema ultimately hangs is attributable to its director rather than Bolt.

It's Lean himself who at the last minute, dubbed the part of the serene man looking out to Lawrence as he finally reaches the Sun Canal following a near-fatal desert crossing. We see the heroic juxtaposition of a ship seeming to cross the desert on the horizon and hear a soldier repeat from afar, "Who are you?" It's the defining question in a film that paints an intimate portrait of psychological tragedy as one of the grandest (most magnificent) canvases in the history of cinema.

It's a daunting work of art, from Freddie Young's cinematography to John Box's dressing of the manner sequence, or Peter O'Toole channeling in the sunlight aboard the crashed train (shot by André de Toth) and Nic Roeg's second unit as Maurice Jarre's score swells. From Lean's single-shot achievement of the mad on Aqaba to the visual juxtaposition of cinema's most breathtaking "war" cut. But of all miracles, readily apparent on screen, perhaps the greatest is that the film even got made in the first place.

TE Lawrence was vehemently opposed to the idea of anyone adapting his autobiography *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, for the screen, telling writer Robert Graves in 1925, "I loathe the notion of being colonised. My sure mark to cinema always deepens in me a sense of their superficial filth. 'Vulgarity' I would have said only I like the vulgarity that means common sense, and the baseness of film seems to me like an edited and belated hell specimen."

Yet the legend of Lawrence of Arabia was one born out of cinema, an heroic saga who grew in public consciousness less from literary autobiography than from the twirling, fevered roundness and the lectures of Lowell Thomas, one of the few war correspondents with direct access to Lawrence. By the time Sam Spiegel acquired the rights from the estate trustees in 1954, the story of Lawrence of Arabia had already become the stuff of scholarly legend, cemented through various stage and biographical investigations (Lean's own Prince Prasad, Alec Guinness, had even played the title role in Terence Rattigan's *Return to the West-End*).

Many valiant but frustrated attempts were made by previous rights holder Alexander Korda to bring Lawrence's story to the screen throughout the 30s and '40s, but myriad factors — from script disapproval to international relations at the outbreak of war — served to thwart them, leaving it to the propaganda machines of the Soviets (the 1938 film *Victory from Africa*) and Dr Goebbels (*Cyprus in Damascus*) to mount their own assaults on his legacy.

Lean and Bolt sought to de-mythologise Lawrence, to discover any Kipling-esque, cowboy-and-rebels heroics for something that appeared to Shakespearean tragedy happy to play fast and loose with historical veracity if it served their portrait of a flawed, nervous, genius — a modern cinematic Planchet. There

is no biography. If there's one aspect that prevents Bolt's outstanding screenplay from quite reaching the dizzying pedestal upon which Spielberg places it, it lies in its overstatement of Lawrence's contradictions: the "no one ever knew him" assertion with which the film begins, building towards the answer, "least of all Lawrence himself."

O'Toole's performance never shakes from Lawrence's preening narcissism and arrogance, even hubris; yet he effects a remarkable counterbalance both in his compassion and his emotional and strategic intelligence. TE Lawrence himself stipulated in an early contract that there should be no women in his screen story, and Lean obiges by keeping his alleged homosexuality close to the surface. Lawrence's well-documented masochistic tendencies certainly leave the Deira rape sequence open to performative interpretation.

Wherever TE Lawrence was Lean's film remains an interpretation of unparalleled ambition: its 325-day shoot lasting as long as the Arab Revolt itself. This new 4K restoration of the 227-minute Director's Cut, glorious in a way *Lawrence of Arabia* never has before, a cinematic Blu-ray release serving to mock even the most expensive home cinema set-up. It's a film made for the cinema, a film, in fact, for which cinema itself was made. **MUT MURRY**

ANTICIPATION Lean's 4K restoration of *David Lean's* *Lawrence of Arabia* 1962 epic

5

ENJOYMENT Still enthralling

5

IN REFLECTION Lawrence has never looked more beautiful

5



Bond 24

As the world comes down with a severe case of Bond fever on the back of the release of *Skyfall*, Adam Lee Davies and David Jenkins ponder what adventures 007 might have next...

DJ: For this new Bond, I think it should start off with a pre-credits sequence of James on a stag do.

ALD: That could actually fly

DJ: It's like in *The Living Daylights* where you see he's mates with one of the other double. Or, so he is on a stag do.

ALD: on the Circle Line. They have to drink a pint of hot cider and Red Bull at every stop. And Pitbull should do the soundtrack.

DJ: What is Pitbull?

ALD: I don't know. He's on MTV a lot

DJ: So how about the film proper starts at a rock festival on the slopes of Mt Fuji. Bond is there on holiday with all his Promise Hill chums

ALD: Is he pretending to be as laid like Bond often does? He's humming along to Coldplay. He's got his squaky Carling that's mostly foam - but he doesn't mind, like a warning a River Island Howman short

DJ: It's obviously sent Manx opening down to Kent to get him some cabana wear

ALD: I'm also picturing him somehow being a quarterback for the Ghana Falcons and stopping the world from blowing up during the final quarter of the Super Bowl

DJ: A cross cultural thing. Yanks love Bond

ALD: Yeah. He comes on and says, 'How do you play this Moody game?'

DJ: And 'Where do you take the free kicks from?'

ALD: It turns out the Denver Broncos are being run by Dig Ol

DJ: Yes, and Obama is set to present the trophy to the winning team and Bond has to

feel an assassination plot

ALD: What if the trophy is full of arsenic and they splash it on Obama's face and turn him white?

DJ: And he loses all of his votes. Or what about golf? Bond's gone middle aged, wants to get out of M16 and decides he wants to get into sport. Golf-finger



ALD: *The Spy Who Got Me Outgoing*
Go! Ball of Justice: Live and Let's Drive

DJ: The final scene is set on a driving range and Bond has to hit a ball 500 yards onto a water course watch

ALD: ...on the nose cone of a Zepplin. Before it crashes into The World Mosque

DJ: Or the Taj Mahal? Okay, we need to start thinking arms candy

ALD: Sharon Hogan?

DJ: No

ALD: Julia Berres?

DJ: No. What about Jenna Kruse?

ALD: No, but what about the unstable cyclist Victoria Pendleton? She's got lovely hair

DJ: By the time and the final film comes out, any mention of the Olympics is going to look well naïf. What about Lady Gaga?

ALD: Yes. The thing about her is, even if they really fancy her, most people have no idea what she looks like. She's just some make-up under an umbrella.

DJ: Lauren Laverne?

ALD: No. What about Emma Watson?

DJ: Yes, she plays a Thai prostitute whose mother was disfigured by one of those tennis ball pitching machines. Ironically

ALD: Ben Elton as Q?

DJ: Yes. Which brings us to gadgets

ALD: It's a tussle-up between Apple and Android now

DJ: What about he has the next generation of iPhone, which doubles as a remote control for a TV? Or one of those indoor helicopters you get from Magine?

ALD: Talking car?

DJ: Talking book?

ALD: Talking clock?

DJ: But it definitely has to be called Two New Bonds

ALD: Sold!

[Tape ends]

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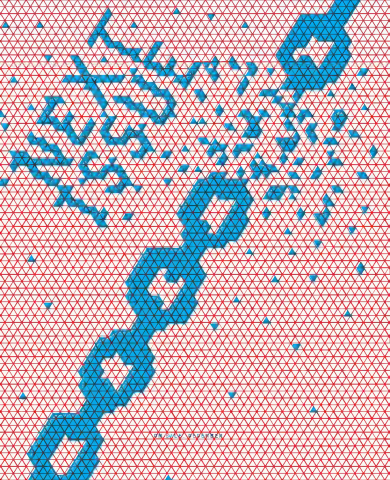
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